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Quod placet, hic spinas colligit, ille rosas !”

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To

CLIFFORD D. SHARP

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THE HIGHER DRAMA

PELISSIER AND MARIANE

[SCENE. *A glade in an ancient forest. The trees have vast trunks. Over and through them (L.) one can dimly see the crown of a ruined tower. Its stones are massive, and it has been inhabited, but is so no longer. It is evening.* PÉLISSIER and MARIANE stand by the bole of a great tree, melancholy and silent, gazing at the last light. He is of robust build, and she clings to him for support. Both are pale with that mysterious pallor that lives in moonbeams when a cloud half covers the surface of the moon.]

MARIANE. Pélissier! [A wind shakes the branches and the leaves rustle.] Pélissier! . . . It is a little wind! . . . Did you not hear it, Pélissier?

PELISSIER. Yes, Mariane, it is a little wind, a child wind. Perhaps it has lost its way in the world. We, have we lost our way, Mariane?

MARIANE. Pélissier! . . .

PELISSIER. Yes, I think we have lost our way. . . . I dreamt last night that I was walking, walking amid the meshes of an enormous net of bushes and plants which sucked and throttled me so that I could hardly breathe. . . . And you, you were there too, Mariane. I could hear you somewhere making little cries, the cries I have often heard you make when you have found some wounded thing: some bird, perhaps, that the cruel cat has been tormenting. . . .

MARIANE. Pélissier! . . .

PELISSIER. I think that in my dream we were wandering there for ever.

MARIANE. Pélissier! . . .

[*It has grown darker. The moon has not yet risen, but the tower and the other objects are still faintly visible in a diffused bluish light, like the light of infinity. For a space PÉLISSIER and MARIANE are silent. Slowly, over the farthest trees, the moon rises. The tower becomes a pillar of black and silver, and a pure and brilliant ray strikes PÉLISSIER and MARIANE.*

PELISSIER. Hush, Mariane !

MARIANE. Pélissier !

PELISSIER. Do you not see them ?

MARIANE. Who, Pélissier ? . . . Oh, I am afraid. . . . Oh, I am cold !

PELISSIER [*his voice is low and level and brooding, and his eyes are fixed and sorrowful*]. They are over there, over behind that tree. They are coming this way. Do you not see them ? It is the six old men whom we saw yesterday by the place where the old king lived.

MARIANE. Oh, Péliſſier! Oh, I see them! Oh, they are horrible! I think I must have known them long ago. . . . I think I must have known them before I was born!

[From the forest on the left SIX OLD MEN enter. The five of them are blind and deaf and dumb, but the sixth is not dumb. He is only blind and deaf. They walk very slowly and stumblingly. The first feels his way with his staff. The others also feel their ways with their staffs, tripping over sticks and dead leaves as they go.

THE FIRST OLD MAN. Moo! *[He enters the wood on the right.]*

THE SECOND OLD MAN. Moo! *[He enters the wood on the right.]*

THE THIRD OLD MAN. Moo! *[He enters the wood on the right.]*

THE FOURTH OLD MAN. Moo! [He enters the wood on the right.]

THE FIFTH OLD MAN. Moo! [He enters the wood on the right.]

THE SIXTH OLD MAN. Ah! . . . I think God must be dead to-night. . . . [He stumbles.] Blast! [He enters wood on the right.]

PELISSIER. Did you hear what the sixth old man said, Mariane?

MARIANE [vaguely, as one in a dream]. Oh! . . . There is a child there . . . over where the old king lived. . . . It is blue. . . . It is blue like the night! . . . I do not know why it is blue! . . . Oh, I am afraid!

PELISSIER. He said that he thought God must be dead to-night. . . . I remember when the old king died, the old king with the amber eyes and the gentle voice, that there was an old knight there who was in the old wars. He was so old that no

one knew when he was born or who was his father. They said that he was born before the world began. . . . I think, perhaps, he was never born. . . .

MARIANE. Yes, I have heard of him, Péliſſier. . . . It was Aggravette who told me, your cousin Aggravette. . . . We had been one day over the lake in a great galley. The rowers rowed. They rowed hard. They were great men, and their muscles gleamed in the sun. . . .

Enter A MAN

THE MAN. X22, what are you doing off your beat?

CURTAIN

II

EPIGRAMMATIC COMEDY

[*Tea-time at the Ashingtons'*. DORA ASHINGTON, a pretty fair-haired girl of twenty-one, pours tea. Her brother HAROLD, CYRIL BUCK, and ETHELRED UNDERWOOD are scattered in various careless attitude toying with éclairs. Furniture as usual.

DORA. What a world it is !

CYRIL. Yes, an oblate spheroid flattened at both ends like an orange and simply covered with scandals.

ETHELRED. I think, you know, that what this age really lacks is critics.

CYRIL. Yes; the critic's main function as now interpreted is offering plausible explanations. Our critics have no mental life. Mental life consists chiefly in the

discovery that the things our ancestors said were true.

DORA. Oh, how can you say we have no critics! What about Mr Lumley?

CYRIL. Mr Lumley rows with commendable energy in the river of life, but he is always catching crabs.

DORA. Well, Mr Chumley then?

ETHELRED. He splits hairs the size of barge-poles.

DORA. But what about Mr Dumley?

HAROLD. Mr Dumley has made a very big reputation. No, I do not care to say he has made a big reputation; I prefer to say that he has made an extensive, bad smell.

DORA. I'm afraid you're all very sarcastic just because you know I'm not clever. I suppose you will be saying that we have no artists next.

CYRIL. We have no artists.

DORA [*triumphantly*]. Well, I've heard you say yourself that Mr Pumley was marvellous.

CYRIL. How marvellous, but how unreadable.

DORA. And even Ethelred has admitted that there are good passages in his poems.

ETHELRED. Imitation pearls in a very genuine dunghill.

DORA. You are all throwing me overboard. I suppose, Harold, you will turn on your favourite, Mr Mumley, next.

HAROLD. I do not know what you mean by my favourite, Dora. Mr Mumley, as it appears to me, spends most of his time in a laborious pursuit of the obvious. He goes to the North Pole and finds it a *cliché*.

DORA. Oh, how silly you are. You are all perfectly unreasonable.

CYRIL. Reason is a dangerous weapon to play with.

ETHELRED. Oh, certainly, Cyril.

CYRIL. A blunt razor may be sharper than a sharp knife. We are all proud to belong to a Vampire on which the sun never sets. If you take a horse to the water you must expect him to drink. The worst of young women is that they are so middle-aged. They refuse to leap before they look. The modern married woman should never forget she is modern, should sometimes forget she is a woman, but should always forget she is married. No, Dora, you are not married. [Sighing.] I sometimes wish you were.

HAROLD *and* ETHELRED. I think we must be going. The worst of going is that it implies coming back. Good-bye.

[They go out

DORA. Did you really mean what you said . . . Cyril?

CYRIL. Yes; I really meant what I said.

DORA. So there's no more to be said.

[*They embrace*

CYRIL. The worst of engagements is that they seldom end in marriage. The worst of marriage is that it always begins with an engagement. Whenever I am engaged I always feel as though even marriage would be preferable. I have always felt that except when I have been married. Only last week I was married and I felt like it then. I married one of my housemaids. I felt that it was time I introduced economy into my household. I have always been as poor as a church mouse because I have had to maintain so many servants. Being a man with a stronger will-power than my friends

suspect I came to a determined resolution. I made up my mind that I would diminish the number of my servants, and I could only do that by marrying them one by one and retaining their services without salary.

DORA. A wife in time saves nine.

CYRIL [*severely*]. I suspect, Dora, that that means nothing. Rolling stones always gather moss. I am not a rolling stone and I have gathered no moss. [*Sadly.*] No, I fear the moss has gathered me. That is the worst of moss; it is so avaricious. I am a prey to every grasping moss whose path I cross. There is old Moses Moss for example.

DORA. Oh, Cyril, you don't mean to say you have fallen into the hands of those horrid moneylenders?

CYRIL. No, Dora; would that it were so; they might have lent me some money. As it is I have only been able to borrow

from complete strangers. I do it at night with the help of a kindly policeman who was at college with me. He has risen in the world; I have come down. I think he got his job through influence. That is the worst of influence; it is so influential.

DORA. I am really awfully sorry for you, Cyril; I would do anything for you except break our engagement.

CYRIL. No; I do not ask you to do that, Dora. As a man makes his bed so he must lie, even if he makes it up a tree. That is the worst of trees; they are so up. I think that trees should have grown horizontally; they would have been more easy to descend. I once knew a man who had a mustard-tree. But the birds of the air did not build their nests in it [*sighing*], so he cut it down.

DORA. I think I hear father coming.

Enter MR ASHINGTON

DORA. Father, Cyril and I are going to be married.

MR ASHINGTON [*shaking hands with CYRIL*]. My dear fellow, there's nothing could have delighted me more. A wife, as Solomon said, is better than rubies.

CYRIL. Who was Solomon?

CURTAIN

III

THE CAGED-EAGLET LINE

OR, HOW WE MAKE OUR PLAYS READABLE

[The scene is the morning-room at the Blenkinsops'. Chairs, books, pictures, etc. Sofa R.C., doors R., R.C., L., and L.C.; French-window between centre doors if there is sufficient space. MRS BLENKINSOP is seated at a large writing-desk against the right wall and her daughter EUPHROSYNE is writing at a smaller desk facing the opposite wall. MRS BLENKINSOP is a lady past middle age, portly, treble-chinned, large-bosomed, hook-nosed, and pince-nez'd. She looks—as indeed she is—the type of prosperous philistinism. When MR BLENKINSOP was first engaged to her she was a plump and stupid damsel in much request at tennis-parties. Years

have aged and rounded her; she does not play tennis nowadays; in fact, her only exercise consists of taking her dog out for a daily drive in a victoria. She is engaged in writing a letter to a Mrs Pott-Wither asking her whether she is willing to go halves in a garden-party on behalf of the local branch of the Degenerate Tinkers' Aid Society. It is not easy to guess how EUPHROSYNE has put up with her so long. At last, after several minutes busy scratching, she turns her head towards her daughter.

MRS BLENKINSOP. Euphrosyne!

[EUPHROSYNE turns with an impatient look. She has for some time been secretly a member of the Syndicalist Party of Great Britain and Ireland. Her smooth hair, parted in the middle, her grey, direct eyes, and her square jaw, all betray resolution and originality. Only her strong sense

of duty has kept her at home so long. She has no more sympathy with her asinine parents than you or I would have; but she knows that in their way they are fond of their only child. Lately, however, domestic bonds have irked her more and more, and an explosion may be expected at any moment. She frowns slightly and bites her lower lip. Still, she answers.

EUPHROSYNE. Yes, mother.

[MRS BLENKINSOP is blissfully unaware of her daughter's irritation, and she smiles fatly as she half-turns and surveys the neatly dressed figure. Probably she wonders as she looks at her whether or not she will marry Albert Pott-Wither, brother-in-law of Mrs Pott-Wither, a bald-headed, nut-faced stockbroker of forty-five. But she puts such thoughts temporarily out of her head and resumes the conversation.

MRS BLENKINSOP. Do you remember the number of Mrs Pott-Wither's house?

[*EUPHROSYNE is naturally annoyed at the triviality of the interruption, but succeeds in stemming the tide of anger. Nevertheless her breast heaves rather quickly as she replies.*

EUPHROSYNE. Oh, I think it is 24 Hazelville Road, but I am not quite sure.

[*Both resume their writing, but after a couple of minutes Mrs BLENKINSOP looks up again, patting her hair lightly with her hand. She gives a little cough.*

MRS BLENKINSOP. Do you know whether the Pott-Withers have changed their telephone number?

EUPHROSYNE. No; 664 Bracton.

MRS BLENKINSOP. I thought it was 663.

EUPHROSYNE. No; 664.

[*They continue writing until the elder woman rises to go to the telephone. She*

goes out door R.C. EUPHROSYNE springs from her chair and begins kicking the ground. She paces hurriedly up stage and then returns to her chair.

EUPHROSYNE. Oh, damn!

[MRS BLENKINSOP re-enters from the door by which she has emerged. She stands for a moment near the door scrutinising her daughter's bent back with a puzzled look. Then she gives a little sigh of non-comprehension and returns to her work. After a quarter of an hour's silence the door R.C. is suddenly flung open and MR BLENKINSOP appears framed in the darkness behind it. He is very short, very stout, very shiny, very bald. His frock-coat flows back from an ample white-and-striped waistcoat whereon glitters a gold watch-chain with many seals. He wears spats. That is the kind of man he is. Once for a short time he sat on the

local Board of Guardians; but finding that there was very little to be made out of it, owing to the nature of his business, he retired after one term of service. Since then he has taken no part whatever in public life. He regards his daughter as a pretty young fool and sneers at her attempts to get in touch with modern movements. He hems loudly; then slowly rolls up to the sofa, on which, with great care and effort, he deposits himself at full length.

MR BLENKINSOP. Well, Euphrosyne, haven't you got a word for me?

[EUPHROSYNE leaps up, her fist clenched, her cheeks aflame. She is looking splendid and knows it; but after all, she can't help that. She remembers her childhood, but puts the thought out of mind. The climax has come.

EUPHROSYNE. I won't. By God, I won't.

[Her father quivering with rage looks at her lithe, erect form. He contemplates for a moment the notion of knocking her down and flogging her with his umbrella; on second thoughts he doubts his capacity for an enterprise so perilous. After all, he is not, he remembers, so young as he was.

MR BLENKINSOP. Come along; none o' your nonsense.

[EUPHROSYNE takes up an inkpot and brandishes it in a minatory manner. This is the last straw. As she begins her harangue she speaks in a low, tense, level voice; but as she proceeds her voice rises until to her quailing parents it seems as though all the elements had been let loose.

EUPHROSYNE. None of my nonsense. No; you sha'n't have any more of my nonsense. Oh yes; I've borne with you night

and day, year after year, and I can tell you both I'm sick of it; yes, sick of it. You wallowing beasts, you can think of nothing but eating and drinking. Do you think that I am cast in your own mould? What right have you over me? Yes, what right? Year after year I have kept silence for your sakes. I have stifled and suffocated in the air of this house; but now I am going away. Yes, I am going away. I am going away into the world. It is not food I want and rich clothes and dresses and flowers. I want life. You, you hogs, you do not know what life is. The sun does not shine for you, nor the winds blow, nor the mighty sea of heaven breathe its fragrance. You have never listened to the call of the moon and the chanting of the stars; all the birds of the forest have sung in vain for you. But I want life. Yes, life. I have hungered and thirsted for

life. I want to be free. I want to drink the clouds and take the planets to my arms. Faugh, you are no better than the beasts. You wake and sleep and tomorrow you die and perish utterly away. . . . By heaven, this is the end.

[She picks up a large plant-pot and flings it through the French-window; subsequently climbing through the hole she has made. MRS BLENKINSOP sits at her desk weeping noisily into a large and vulgar handkerchief. MR BLENKINSOP sits up dazed on his sofa. Now and then he whimpers like a hurt animal.]

MR BLENKINSOP. Well. . . . Drat the little . . . hussy.

CURTAIN.

EURIPIDES UP-TO-DATE

[Terrace of the palace at Mycenæ.
AGAPEMONE, deserted by Noeus, paces
distractedly up and down half-listening to
the consoling words of her NURSE. The
CHORUS of handmaidens are range'd at the
back, washing their dirty linen in public.

AGA. O light that blew from Colchis
o'er the sea

Dost thou not dim and darken? . But for
me

Blossoms a greater light, and all my breath
Pales; and the dusty avenues of death
Call with a haven for fulfillèd feet
And violet grass and trees and waters
sweet.

O in the untrodden pastures no man knows,
Cypris, thy hands have raised a lovelier rose

Than all of Argos or the Bactrian land
Ever man gathered.

NURSE. Daughter, stay thy hand,
Wag not the tongue of steel. 'Twere
deadlier sin
To bare thy bird-bright throat and thrust
therein,

Than hers of Pomphalos who, on a day,
Slew both her aged parents as men say
Cold as the mountains. . . .

AGA. Hold thy counsel, crone !
Far off from dark Cythera faintlier blown
A cry comes through the dawn that throbs
the dawn
Swifter than goats' feet on the dewless lawn,
Death, death.

CHO. Who has encountered Death,
Death and the nets of Fate,
Who knows the step and the
breath
The lintel and the gate?

Lo ! even now have her eyes beholden
The ashes of love and the gateway
golden

Foreseen long since in Argos olden
And the marble house long
desecrate.

A cry from the great sea rings
Desolate, alien,
Of gods and ancient things
And war and the slaying of
men;

She hears the echo on roof and rafter
Of scorn and weeping and hollow
laughter,

And tumults and storms and silence
after

And feet that pass and come
not again.

NURSE. Hear now the speech of these
who see thy grief.

AGA. A broken petal and a transient leaf.

NURSE. Time has a potent salve for every smart.

AGA. Who has contrived a medicine for the heart?

NURSE. Nathless our sires were wiser men than we.

AGA. Our dams, I hope, less garrulous. . . . Let be!

CHO. Who may withstand thee, Love, who may frustrate desire?

Thy hands are the hands of Fate and thine eyes more fierce than fire,

Thy wings are plumed with mirth, with joy thy feet are shod,

But the darkling wind that bears thee blows from the throne of God.*

AGA. Mine eyes quiver and shake, my lips are mute.

NURSE. Rash queens ere now have gathered bitter fruit.

* Emendations; as also *passim*.

AGA. Nathless I think that you will
shortly see

The very last of Agapemone.

NURSE. What folly's this?

AGA. O but to tread once more
My father's halls and find again the Shore
Of Tenedos. Ah, there from dawn to dusk
In happy fields of amaranth and musk
My little sister Emmeline and I
Have, ah ! so often, chased the butterfly ;
White was the sunlight there, and bright
the grass

Or ever between my maiden lips did pass
The bane of bitter bread. O could I roam
Thee, Tenedos, and the floors of the old
home,

Thoughtless and free in the place where I
was born. . . .

But see, with a piercing flame I am parched
and torn,

This is the end ; O ye who now remain

Weep for a thing forsaken, a queen self-slain.

NURSE. What, wouldst thou slay thyself? What, is this the end?

Stay now thy hand, for Death's a treacherous friend!

AGA. I go, O halls of Tenedos, I go
Into the 'dark, the dark I do not know.

NURSE. What meanest thou thus gabbling of the dark?

Methinks thy statements overshoot the mark.

AGA. No wind blows always, ever one
wind blows

Whither and why and wherefore no man
knows*

And the Fates are blind and deaf and the
gods are dumb

As woman's life. . . . See now, I come, I
come. [Stabs herself.

* Emendations; as also *passim*.

NURSE. Woe ! Woe ! Whoever would
have thought it,
Cursed be the deed and cursed be him
who brought it.

CHO. I heard a sound by the city wall
As of children weeping and men sigh-
ing,

A sound of waters and stones that fall,
And maidens wounded and old men
dying.

A mighty shouting and ululation
Of death, disaster and damnation*
For truth is hidden and knowledge vain,
And the gods indulge in frightful
crimes,

As also, in fairness I add, do men.

And, to cut a long story short, till
Time's

Vintage last-grown fulfils the cup
We never can tell what may turn up.

* *q.v.* Sir Edward Grey.

THE STRIFE OF THE BLATHER-SKITES;
OR, THE STRONG-MINDED MANUFACTURER

[The scene is the dining-room in Mr Blatherskite's house. It is the fifty-third week of the strike. The chimneys of the works, which can be seen through the window, are smokeless. Occasionally there are borne on the wind through the open window the moans of starving people and the angry hoots of strikers who are listening to an incendiary speech by one of their leaders. Old MR BLATHERSKITE, who, by a curious and convenient coincidence, has a face exactly like Mr Norman M'Kinell's, sits on a hard chair L.C. facing the audience. His lips are pursed grimly, his

grey rock-like head is supported by a strong hand. He does not move, but meditates. There is two minutes' silence, which at last he breaks with a monosyllable.

MR BLATHERSKITE. Pah!

[He is silent again. Enter from door R.

GERALD BLATHERSKITE, his son, a fair-haired youth with a small diaphanous moustache. He hesitates as he watches his motionless sire, but at last plucks up courage to walk up to him though not to look him in the face.

GERALD. Father!

MR BLATHERSKITE. Well?

GERALD. Father. . . . Two hundred strikers' children have died of starvation since yesterday.

MR BLATHERSKITE. Well?

GERALD [After uneasy hesitation]. Oh, father, can't you do anything for them?

MR BLATHERSKITE. I am not responsible for them.

GERALD. Oh, for God's sake, father, give them some food.

MR BLATHERSKITE. Let them return to work.

GERALD. They would, father, if you would meet them half-way.

MR BLATHERSKITE. They have had my views on that subject.

GERALD. But if you don't they will all starve to death.

MR BLATHERSKITE. Let them starve.

GERALD. But . . .

MR BLATHERSKITE [*Picking up a newspaper and reading with an indifferent air*]. You may go.

[*GERALD walks a yard up stage; then turns and looks at his father, makes as if to speak, thinks better of it, and silently goes out, shutting the door quietly behind him.*]

MR BLATHERSKITE. Pah!

[Enter from 'door l. HELEN BLATHERSKITE, determined-looking and artily dressed. She means to take a firm stand, so begins by pulling over a chair to her father's vicinity and taking a firm seat. MR BLATHERSKITE does not look up.

HELEN. Father!

MR BLATHERSKITE. Well?

HELEN. This dispute has simply got to stop.

MR BLATHERSKITE. The men can stop it when they like.

HELEN. You don't realise how awful the suffering in the village is.

MR BLATHERSKITE. How the devil do you know what I realise?

HELEN. Oh, but you can't or you would agree to anything.

MR BLATHERSKITE. You seem to be as great a fool as your mother and almost as

great a fool as your brother. You may leave the room.

HELEN [*standing up with crimson cheeks and quivering hands*]. I will not leave the room. You must hear me. Your barbarity is the talk of the county. If you resist much longer I am certain the men will murder us all.

MR BLATHERSKITE. They are too cowardly for that.

[*He goes to the bell, rings it, and returns to his chair and his impassive attitude.* Enter PARLOURMAID.

MR BLATHERSKITE. Wills, you may show Miss Helen out of the room.

[*HELEN, after a passionate gesture, leaves the room, the domestic following her.*

MR BLATHERSKITE. Pah!

[*The domestic returns.*

PARLOURMAID. There is a woman with

a baby to see you, sir. She says her name is Parker.

MR BLATHERSKITE. Bring her in.

[PARLOURMAID goes out and returns with a pale, haggard woman in a ragged shawl, carrying a dirty bundle. The woman stands trembling, and then rushing forward flings herself on her knees in front of the manufacturer.

MR BLATHERSKITE [Slightly raising his eyebrows but not turning his head]. Well?

MRS PARKER. Oo-oo-oo-oo-oo! Five of my babies are dead and this is the last.

MR BLATHERSKITE. Interesting, but irrelevant.

MRS PARKER. Oh, sir, my Jim was such a good husband. He has worked for you for twenty-five years, and he has never said a word against you, even since they came out on strike.

MR BLATHERSKITE. He is on strike. He broke his agreement.

MRS PARKER. Oh, sir, he didn't want to, sir. But he didn't want to be a black-leg.

MR BLATHERSKITE. He can work if he comes back.

MRS PARKER. Oh, sir, he can't come back until the others do. Not until you meet the leaders.

MR BLATHERSKITE. Then he will not come back.

MRS PARKER [*holding out infant*]. My baby is nearly dead, sir . . . it is my last one.

MR BLATHERSKITE [*adjusting his pince-nez and cursorily examining the baby*]. Yes. So it appears.

[*He goes to the bell and rings it; then returns to his seat and his attitude.* Enter PARLOURMAID.

MR BLATHERSKITE. Show this woman to the door.

[*Exit PARLOURMAID and MRS PARKER, sobbing hysterically.*

MR BLATHERSKITE. Hum. Pah!

[*Enter A STRIKER through the window. Looking stealthily around him he sees the motionless figure. Believing it to be asleep he steals on tip-toe into the room and draws a knife.*

MR BLATHERSKITE. I see you. You are a thief like the rest.

THE STRIKER [*dropping his knife in terror*]. I am not a thief. . . . I came to kill you.

MR BLATHERSKITE [*still immobile*]. Ah! you came to kill me. Do you still feel like it? You had better come when I am asleep. It might require less courage then.

STRIKER [*passionately*]. You swine!

You are not worth killing. . . . By God ! it is you that are the murderer. My wife died last night.

MR BLATHERSKITE. Ah ! She was doubtless a fool like other women. You may go.

[THE STRIKER, *in trembling revulsion, retreats through the window, leaving his knife where it fell.* MR BLATHERSKITE rises, walks to it, picks it up, tries the edge along his thumb, and then flings it contemptuously into the waste-paper basket. *He returns to his chair and lights a pipe.*

MR BLATHERSKITE. Pah !

CURTAIN.

OUR GENIAL RUSTICS

[Interior of a cottage; door R. leading out, door L. leading upstairs, fireplace with log fire, oak settle, and coloured prints on the wall, including images of the King and Queen in their coronation robes. Table in middle, at which ETHEL BOFFIN stands peeling potatoes.

ETHEL [*sings*].

O flaming poppies, cornflowers blue,
 Beyond the utmost hill,
The edge o' the world is fair to view
 And all the woods are still.

'Alf past vour and 'im not in yet. 'E was allus like that, late fer every mortal thing. I 'member when I was a-waitin' fer 'im at the altar, and me so fine and vitty in my magenter dress an' all, and him there

a-turnin' up two hours late and passen
a-cussin' 'im like a good 'un. Ah, deary
me, deary me.

[The door slowly opens and ALGERNON TUPP, the postman, cautiously peers in. Observing that she is alone he steps boldly over the threshold. His step startles her and she springs round.]

ETHEL. Oh, Algy, you did give me a turn like. I thought it was me 'usbink.

ALGY *[chuckling]*. He-he. Don't you wish as 'ow it was, eh? *[Coming nearer.]* 'Aven't you got a little kiss for I?

ETHEL *[pushing him away]*. Go on now, Mr Tupp, doan't 'ee be so silly now.

ALGY. Oo be you a-callin' silly? If I keared I might say you was silly, too; yes, and prove it too. An' what's more, there's more nor me knows it.

ETHEL *[clutching the table and gasping]*. What's that you'm a-sayin' of?

ALGY [*getting bolder*]. You know very well what I'm a-sayin', an' 'is name begins with G., in my opinion.

ETHEL [*making a show of indifference*]. Well, you can keep your silly fancies to yourself. George Tibbits is wuth twenty of the likes of you, and if you say a word more about it I'll give yer somethink in the ear'ole wot you won't forgit.

ALGY. Eh wot? That's 'ow it is, is it.

[*Sidles towards her to kiss her.*

ETHEL [*taking up the peeling-knife she has dropped*]. Take that, you swine!

[*Stabs him in the carotid artery; he drops, bleeding freely and obviously dead. She looks around distractedly and, hearing a step at the door, hastily stows the body into the oven and stands over the spilt blood. Enter her husband, TOM BOFFIN, a hulking, drink-sodden fellow whose flabby features are the wreck of a once*

handsome face. He lurches forward with a dazed look.

TOM [*hiccoughing*]. Oop. . . . Got any beer, you . . . oop . . . little sow?

ETHEL. Not for you, you drunken beast. You've 'ad beer and enough these five years. And me never 'ad a baby.

TOM [*striking her*]. 'Ere . . . oop . . . you get me some beer.

ETHEL [*stabbing him in the left breast*]. There's yer beer, you boozy 'og.

[TOM drops dead, and his wife drags him along by the hair and puts him into the left oven. Whilst she is in the act the door leading from the house opens and her GRANDFATHER comes in. He is abstracted, and notices nothing. He hobbles to the settle and with rheumatic groaning sits down on it.

GRANFER. Well, Ethel, my vlower? 'Specs Tom'll be in zoon. Ees, Tom'll be

in zoon. Ees, Tom'll be in zoon. Ees, Tom'll be in zoon. Ees, Tom—

ETHEL [*impatiently interrupting him*]. Shut up, you ole warmint.

GRANFER [*whining*]. Ees, the childer is all like that in these days. She called me an ole warmint, she did. Ees, an ole warmint. Ees, an ole warmint. Ees, an ole—

ETHEL [*springing at him with the knife*]. Gr-r-r-r.

[*Stabs him in the eye, the end of the knife protruding through the back of his head. The body falls to the ground and she leaves it there. The door opens and GEORGE TIBBITS appears. He looks at her with eager expectancy.*

GEORGE. Well, 'ave you bin an' done it?

ETHEL [*triumphantly*]. Yes, I bin and done it. I done 'im in, an' I done granfer

in an' I done Algy Tupp in. They was all fules every one of 'em. Two of 'em be in the oven and the other [*kicking GRAN-FER under the table*] is een 'ere.

GEORGE. All right, my angel of heaven. They'm a good ole damn good riddance, all on 'em. We'll put 'em all down the well, my pearl. 'Ave you got a kiss for I?

ETHEL [*falling into his arms*]. 'Ave I? [*Kisses him on both cheeks and then on the nape of the neck*]. Oh, George, I've dreamed of you night and day. In the corn fields I have let my hair down and bound it with fillets of poppies and garlands of cornflowers, and I have said "These are for my George, for the man with eyes like stars and a neck like a pillar of carven ivory." Oh, George, you don't know what it's been like waitin' all these years. I thought this time would never come. If I'd had a child I think I should have been

able to stand it, a child who would have tugged at my hair with his pretty hands and called me mother. Oh, I've been so lonely . . . the stars . . . the night . . . the hills . . . the waves of the great sea.

[*Wanderingly singing.*

The edge o' the world is fair to view
And all the woods are still.

[*She faints in his arms.*

GEORGE. Yes, my sweeting, it has been a bit of a strain on you, I dare say. O my woman of all women, we will walk together, we two, in the sunlight and the moonlight, and all the past will fall away like a dark cloak.

ETHEL [*waking*]. Where am I?

GEORGE [*patting her head*]. Here, my darling. Have you got any beer?

CURTAIN.

II.—STEPS TO PARNASSUS

THOROUGHNESS IN PLAGIARISING

DOUBTLESS the fault arises rather from lack of vigorous training and sound precept; but no intelligent reader of the bulk of our contemporary poets can have failed to observe that their plagiarisms, though frequent, are not quite whole-hearted. Occasionally the weakness of the flesh asserts itself, and the poet will put in a line which has been somewhat altered, or even (for such is the hardihood of some) a line which expresses in his own language a thought which is to a markedly perceptible extent his own. Naturally these flaws do not escape the notice of our ever-vigilant critics. Their ears are well attuned to

echoes, and they have scant mercy for a sound which has in it nothing of reflection or ricochet. Many young poets, well-intentioned enough, must have been caused piteous heart-burning by the severe reprimands dealt out to them merely because they have from time to time forgotten their "sources." We know that their treatment has been unjust. We know that they have been dealt with hardly when they have conscientiously done their best. They have striven might and main never to let roses and lilies out of their sight; never to forget the silence that is among the lonely hills; and always to remember that elms are immemorial and most other things immeasurable, infinite, immortal, deathless, eternal or everlasting. But they have failed; and they have failed because they have paid no respect to the old motto, "Be thorough!" The masters of old time were

greater than we; we can only get near to them by imitating them; and surely the most perfect form of imitation is literal transcription. There is no need to copy out whole poems as they stand. The corpus of English poetry is very large. With time and concentration any number of lines can be found to fit each other metrically and with respect to rhyme. To quote once more from our rich national treasury of proverbial wisdom, "An ounce of example is worth a pound of argument." Perhaps—such at least is the devout hope of the present writer—the following little lines, hastily strung together in the spare moments of a busy life, may be of help to many who need but a little judicious counsel to set their feet on the highroad which leads to Success and Fame :

A VISION OF TRUTH

As it fell upon a day
I made another garden, yea,
I got me flowers to strew the way
 Like to the summer's rain ;
And the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
“ Poor moralist, and what art thou ?
But blessings on thy frosty pow,
 And she shall rise again ! ”

Lord Ullin reached that fatal shore,
A highly respectable Chancellor,
A military casque he wore
 Half-hidden from the eye ;
The robin redbreast and the wren,
The Pickwick, the Owl and the Waverley pen,
Heckety-peckety my black hen,
 He took her with a sigh.

The fight is o'er, the battle won,
And furious Frank and fiery Hun,
Stole a pig and away he run
 And drew my snickersnee,
A gulf divides the best and worst
“ Ho ! bring us wine to quench our thirst ! ”
We were the first who ever burst
 Under the greenwood tree.

Little Bo-peep fell fast asleep
(She is a shepherdess of sheep),
Bid me to weep and I will weep,
 Thy tooth is not so keen,
Then up and spake Sir Patrick Spens
Who bought a fiddle for eighteenpence
And reverently departed thence,
 His wife could eat no lean.

If an epilogue be desired, the following may perhaps serve as a useful model :—

 'Twas roses, roses all the way
 Nor any drop to drink ;

Or, again :—

 Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
 Whose goodness faileth never,
 For men may come and men may go,
 But I go on for ever.

Some readers may—indeed, very likely will—contend that in one or two places the thread of the narrative in the above lines is a little tangled, or even that many of the lines have no obvious connection with one another.

But that really does not matter. Speaking as one who would not willingly mislead a fly, I tell my brother-poets, with the most whole-hearted concern for their welfare, that obscurity and apparent discontinuity of parts will be all to their advantage. For if the critics cannot understand your argument or detect the junction of your images they will call you a symbolist. And that will be so nice for you.

THE DIFFICULTY OF RHYME

THE use of the rhyming dictionary has been general for many years, and bouts-rimés (or poems constructed after the rhymes have been set down in order) have been known ever since the Middle Ages. Both these methods are clumsy, in so far as they do not give the writer any indication as to what rhymes he shall choose in the first instance. They are clumsy and they are haphazard; a young and inexperienced poet attempting to write bouts-rimés (even with the assistance of a rhyming dictionary) must be constantly baffled and disheartened by finding that he has chosen groups of rhymes that do not go well together, and that convey images which cannot easily be collocated. He might, for

example, select the rhymes "mullet" and "pullet" and the rhymes "chant" and "hierophant." If he does this he will find it exceedingly difficult to link his poem together. Undoubtedly, with luck he might hit upon a pair of rhymes that would fit easily in with "mullet" and "pullet"; as, for instance, "surf" and "turf":—

I would rather be a pullet
On the turf
Than a red or grey mullet
In the surf,

makes very good sense, even though it be not perhaps one of the more ethereal flights of poetry. But left to choose his own pairs of rhymes from a dictionary and to arrange them himself for bouts-rimés, the poet may still find his material very stubborn.

The solution is this. If a man have not the good memory to retain rhymes in his

brain and the knack of arranging them when he has them, the safest and easiest thing for him to do is to profit by the experience of past generations. We do not scorn to use the accumulations that have been handed down to us in other departments of science and art; why should we neglect those which have been piled up by our bards. Painter derives from painter knowledge of design, of the mixing of paints, and of the harmonising of colours. Rhyme is merely the shell, or part of the shell, of a poem, and even those who are purists on the subject of general plagiarism can surely have no objection to a poet making use of a rhyme-scheme that has been found convenient and shapely by another poet who has gone before him. Let poets who are troubled by rhyme, in fact, borrow and adapt arrangements of rhyme from works already in existence.

An ounce of example, as one has often observed before, is worth many ounces of precept. Let us take, for instance, so well-known and deservedly popular a nursery rhyme as :—

Jack and Jill
Went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water,
Jack fell down
And broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after.

Detaching the rhymes from their context we get the following arrangement :—

Jill,
Hill,
Water,
Down,
Crown,
After.

These rhymes are not particularly convenient ones, and a restriction is introduced by the occurrence of the proper name “ Jill ” at the end of the line. This

necessitates the mention in our own poem of a lady name Jill. But, after all, it is a pretty name. Given these rhymes, we can without a moment's hesitation turn on a graceful little lyric like this :

I would I were with gentle Jill
From dawn till eve on Bloxham Hill,
 High above Severn water;
All day we'd gaze entrancèd down
Upon the river's silver crown,
 Nor look before or after.

Should a whimsical touch be desired, the last line might be made to run :—

 And home to supper after.

We see here that not only have we been saved the trouble of finding and co-ordinating rhymes, but that the rhymes ready provided have given us a clue to our subject-matter. Yet our resultant poem is not in the least like the original. Something new has been added to the rich

treasury of English verse. Let us take another example :—

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe,
She had so many children she didn't know what to
do,

So she gave them some broth without any bread,
And whipped them all soundly and put them to
bed.

Our rhyme scheme here will run as follows :—

Shoe,
Do,
Bread,
Bed.

Little or no cogitation will give us a result like this, fully up to the standard of most contemporary verse :—

Lo ! I am poor and pincheth sore the shoe,
I cannot go it as I used to do,
Natheless I'll be content so that I've bread,
A roof above, a pallet for my bed.

That is in the dignified facetious style. But the rhymes given are equally suited to the note of passion and solemn reverence.

The Difficulty of Rhyme 71

I am not worthy to unlace thy shoe ;
Surely thou dost not breathe as others do,
Nectared ambrosia sure must be thy bread,
And doves thy messengers, and clouds thy bed !

Or, yet again, if our rhymes be taken from the chorus of a song recently popular in our lighter places of entertainment, a poem like the following may easily be constructed :—

Hail, holy Liberty ! When thou dost speak
A glory all glory out-shining all men see,
Thy glance, the thunderous perfume of thy tresses,
Bear dreams that trample base reality !
O, should'st thou open once again thy hand
And tell abroad the splendour of thy name,
The whole great universe should be thy picture
And bliss make bright the universal frame.

Enough has, it is hoped, been said to indicate the nature and use of the method proposed. With this key a new Shakespeare may (who knows?) unlock his heart.

III

THE HUMOROUS VERSE WRITER'S EQUIPMENT

THERE must be many a man who has a strong desire to write humorous verse for our weekly periodicals but whose efforts are constantly thwarted by his inability to think of anything funny. All around him he sees men who are apparently quite devoid of a sense of humour but who seem able to write any quantity of fluent humorous verse that fetches good prices. Such men may be grateful for a few hints on the technique of humorous verse construction. Knowledge is power, and it is the duty of those who possess knowledge to communicate it to their less fortunate fellows who stand in need of it.

The plain truth of the matter is this.

There is no need whatever for our young entertainer to have any funny or original notions of his own. If a few simple rules are followed the humour will **MAKE ITSELF**! These indispensable rules are few in number, easy to memorise, and easy to observe.

The first rule is that normal phraseology should as much as possible be avoided. Use either slang or stilted circumlocutions. A judicious admixture of the two is best. Surprise is the essence of humour, and there is no surer way of producing it than this. Long words and periphrastic sentences have, when employed in avowedly humorous verse, an irresistibly facetious air. There is no necessity for the writer himself to see anything amusing in them; he is sure of that effect upon the reader that it is his desire to achieve.

Take an example. Suppose you have

chosen as your subject the death of a favourite Pomeranian dog. The rough draft of your conception runs as follows: "He was a nice dog. I had him a long time. He was given me by an uncle. I am very sorry he is dead." That in itself is not very funny. But it may very easily be developed into a second prose draft which will run as follows: "He was a hound of benevolent and kindly disposition. Long ere the days of Lloyd Georges and Churchills he was established, a household deity, upon my hearth. He was bestowed upon me by an avuncular relative, a good old cove. I weep bitterly because he has kicked the bucket."

The second rule is that you should, whenever possible, illustrate your text with any illustrations save the ones that naturally occur to you. Let us suppose that the dog was a nice dog. The first thing that

occurs to you as an illustration of this quality is that he licked your hand. It would be permissible to mention this in a roundabout form, such as "he deposited lingual moisture on my digits"; but it would be better to keep clear of it altogether. Your plan is to think of some species of benevolent and pleasant act that could not be performed by a dog and to attribute that to the deceased. Say, for instance, "He often mixed my 'drinks (liquid beverages) for me when I was tired," or, "He could always be relied upon to make a fourth for me at bridge."

These two rules will be quite sufficient to ensure the proper management of your subject-matter, with the proviso that you always speak of small or common things with great veneration and of venerable and solemn and great things with familiarity. With regard to form there are several

small things to remember. Your metre and the length of the line should be determined by the first two lines that occur to you. The key to success in these matters lies in the management of rhyme. In the first place you should select unusual words and insist on finding rhymes for them; this process will lead to many very amusing results. In the second place you should, when possible, put proper names at the end of lines and find rhymes for them. And, as a matter of general practice, you should have a preference for bi- and tri-syllabled rhymes over those of one syllable. Better than sacrifice an unusual tri-syllabled rhyme, wander from your train of thought and let the rhyme suggest any divagation or parenthesis it will. All such things will contribute to the desired element of surprise. The following lines have been constructed on these principles

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without the help of any peculiar individual skill or knack :—

Hail and farewell, hail and farewell, my Fido,
Most charitable of the canine race,
Surely none ever mourned a hound as I do,
That peerless miracle of strength and grace ;
Never was hunter fleeter in the chase,
Never was friend more jovial at the table ;
I choke with sobs, the tears run down my face,
I mean to weep as long as I am able.

Long, long ago he came from Pomerania,
Long ere the days of Churchill and such refuse,
Brought by a relative who had a mania
For buying dogs and giving them to nephews ;
A good old cove, albeit of rather stiff views
About the rights of relatives avuncular,
Who had one of those trumpet things the deaf use,
Also a nasal ornament carbuncular.

Never didst fail to make a fourth at auction,
To gossip when I felt like conversation,
Or hold thy canine peace when I would talk shun,
Or join me in convivial relaxation.
O noblest of thy tikey generation,
I am so sick that you have kicked the bucket
That I shall go on mourning your prostration
Until my friends petition me to chuck it.

It is possible that you do not think this poem funny. Nor do I; in fact, I think it is repulsively silly. But you must admit that it is like many others that are classified as humorous, and that with the aid of the above hints you could have written it yourself. It would be certain of acceptance by most journals.

IV

SOME ESSENTIALS OF CRITICISM

It would be ridiculous to pretend to instruct any young man in respect of judgment. It is impossible to inculcate by maxim, rule or example a faculty for the proper discrimination of good or bad in literature. In that sense criticism is either born in a man or not born in him and little more can be said of it. But there is another kind of critic than the born judge of letters; there is the practising critic, whose duty it is to fill a certain amount of space in our daily and weekly newspapers with what are called " reviews " of books, and with articles on authors, dead and alive. In the absence of a good manual of their craft these men, at present, have to

acquire a mastery of it very painfully and slowly through practice. It is not the intention of the present writer to supply that lack, but he may be doing young critics some slight service if he gives a few hints on the subject. Such hints the young are not likely to obtain from older brethren in the profession, as frank speech about their technique is not common among them.

For convenience one may make here a division between the preparatory work necessarily precedent to the critical career, and the actual practice of criticism. What is the minimum of equipment which a man should possess if he is to make a really considerable figure as a critic? We are, be it understood, leaving taste out of the question; on the one hand, it cannot, as we have said, be taught, and, on the other hand, tastes differ; and, whatever a critic's tastes may be, he is in a safe enough posi-

tion if he possesses the requisite amount of learning. And this learning is not a difficult thing to acquire.

A critic must have a good memory; if he have that all things are made much easier for him. And he must have a good memory for this reason: it is necessary that he should remember what he reads. He need not read many literary works—poems, essays and what not. If he reads them—the thing can be done very rapidly, since the motive is rather a business motive than a desire for spiritual or æsthetic sensations—so much the better; but it is rather a work of supererogation. One or two works by each author will in any case be sufficient; but what is essential is that the critic should know what may be called the “plots” of a great number of works by a great number of authors. These plots and their atmospheres may be obtained

from prefaces, from biographies and, most of all, from other reviews. It is a prime necessity that the critic should read a very great deal of contemporary criticism. From this he will discover what various authors stand for (as Ibsen for revolt and emancipation and protest against the "compact majority"), what are these authors' leading literary characteristics (as the "subtle irony" of Anatole France and the "barbaric yawp" of Walt Whitman) and, above all, who are the proper authors with which to deal at any particular moment.

This latter consideration, save for those few critics who specialise in one author and acquire an encyclopædic knowledge of his writings, is a matter of prime importance. You must not hunt about for authors whom you yourself prefer, nor must you write about unknown men, or great men to whom

at the moment no one else is devoting any attention. Very often the way is quite clear for you. The centenary of the birth or death of any writer calls imperatively for an estimate of his place in literature and an epitome of that all-important thing his "message." The appearance, again, of a new collected edition will call for similar studies. But beyond all this there are always certain authors who are, so to speak, in the air. How exactly this comes about it is difficult to say. In part it is due to a "boom" in some modern author who, after a number of years' obscurity, during which but a few people have appreciated him (not including yourself), attains a sudden hold over the public or a sudden vogue amongst intellectual folk which impels continual articles about him and invariable mention of him in articles about other men. And sometimes it is traceable

to natural exhaustion and reaction. Man is an animal fond of variety. A continual surfeit of one dish cloys his appetite. If he reads about Shelley all one year he wishes to read all about Keats the next year; if one year you have written about nobody save Gorki and Borrow, next year may find you hard at work on Tolstoi and Sir Thomas Browne. Whoever it be, you will always be safe enough if you keep your eyes and ears open; that soul-of-the-crowd of which modern psychologists write would almost seem to work amongst reviewers in some special manner; so swiftly and imperceptibly does there spread from one to another what may be called the "consciousness of vogue."

You know whom to write about; your mind is a calendar of the names, dates, characteristics and love affairs of all the greater writers of all ages and climes, and

you have well-stocked libraries at hand where you may look up facts about any lesser person whom you may find it desirable to mention; in what style shall your articles be written?

Firstly, keep your imagination and your sense of humour (if you are endowed with such) in check; as also your independent judgment. It will disturb your readers if you make jokes; the exercise of imagination will demand from them a mental effort which they do not desire to make (or they would be reading books); and the exercise of independent judgment is both insolent and an act of treachery to the whole body of critics.

Secondly, your work will gain much in impressiveness and weight if you decorate it with a maximum number of references to authors, living and dead. Remember that almost any author may be mentioned in

connection with almost any other. If he cannot be brought in for comparison he can be brought in for contrast; and, failing these, he can be brought in by way of parenthesis. Perhaps an illustration or two may make this more clear.

(1) "Mr Timmins is a great satirist. He is in the true line of descent from Aristophanes and Lucian, Rabelais and Cervantes, Swift and Byron. It is true that each of these great masters had qualities of which he is devoid and that he has qualities which none of them possessed. For a parallel, for example, to his subtle artistry of phrase we should have to go to Walter Pater, and we can remember no one since Catullus (except perhaps Heine) who could so suddenly etch intense passion in six flaming words."

(2) "Mr Peakyblinder's verse has not the meditative calmness of Wordsworth's, nor

the lyrical enthusiasm of Shelley's, but in its way it is unique."

(3) "The late Mark Twain in one of his books evidenced as proof of the stupidity of the ant that instead of walking round a blade of grass which stood in its way it would go up one side and down the other. We are far from imputing stupidity to Miss Chaffers, but we confess that the laboriousness of her method puts us strongly in mind of S. L. Clemens' ant."

Thirdly, as to phraseology. Individual phrases, if you read sufficient current criticism, will come ready enough to your pen. Do not forget to use the word "stuff" at least once in every article, as : "This is no ordinary book, it is compact of the very stuff of man's existence." Other useful phrases are legion in number, and a few specimens, chosen at random, must suffice. "The root of the matter,"

“divine discontent,” “lambent humour,” “beautiful but ineffectual angel,” “slim volume,” “tears away shams and illusions,” “haunting and elusive beauty,” “that subtle sympathy which is the secret of his spell,” “rare tenacity and singleness of purpose,” “that vein of cynicism that mars so much of his best work,” “a veritable mine of quaint lore,” “decked in the shreds and tatters of an outworn philosophy” : these are but a casual string which might be lengthened indefinitely. With respect to more sustained passages, there are two chief ways of making them effective. One is to take a phrase and repeat it several times in different forms. The second is to fasten on any metaphorical expression which comes uppermost as you write, and to elaborate the metaphor in all its details. As, for instance :—

“ Professor Chubb says that Hawkins grafted the French variety of lyric drama on to the native English stem. That in a sense is true, but it needs qualification. Hawkins did so graft the foreign growth on our English tree. But in doing so he stripped that foreign growth of its dead and diseased leaves, roughened its effeminately smooth bark, multiplied its blossoms and gave a new vitality and a new activity to its sap.”

THE MERCIFUL WIDOW

AN ESSAY IN TRANSPONTINE POETRY

WITH APOLOGIES TO J—— M——

INSIDE a cottage by a common
There lived an aged widow woman,
She had twelve children (quite a lot),
And often wished that she had not.

“ S’welp me,” she often sighed, “ I’d
rather

You’d had a less prolific father;
Better than raise this surging mob
That God had bowled me for a blob.”

Amongst her seven strapping sons
There were some interesting ones.
Even the baby James, for instance,
Had killed a man without assistance;
And several more in divers ways
Had striven to sing their Maker’s praise.

Henry, quite small, had tried to smother
His somnolent recumbent mother;
Which failing, when she hollered fearful,
He looked upon her quite untarful,
With something of Don Juan's calm,
Proceeding thus without a qualm :—
“ O mother in our hours of ease,
As irritating as ten fleas,
When pain and anguish wring the brow
A fatuously lethargic sow,
This time I haven't put you through it,
But if you wait a day or two, it
Will be quite clear I mean to do it.”
Whereat the mother murmured “ Law !
I'll gi'e yer a wipe across the jaw ! ”

Another son, Ezekiel,
Was well upon the road to hell,
Once every fortnight he betrayed
An unsuspecting village maid,
And now and then he went much furder

By rounding off the job with murder.
Sometimes they took him to the 'sizes,
But there he told outrageous lieses,
His loving family, unblushing,
Always unanimously rushing
To help him with false alibises.
Richard was just another such,
But William, Sam and John were much
More evil and debauched than these.
The account of their atrocities
Might make a smelting furnace freeze.
Without a scintilla of shame
They bragged of things I cannot name.
I represent them here by blanks.

(READER : "For this relief much thanks !")

Hedda Lucrezia Esther Waters,
The eldest of the widow's daughters,
In early infancy absorbèd
A dreadful liking for the morbid.

She much preferred the works of Ibsen
To those of Mr Dana Gibson,
And when she went to bed at night
She prayed by yellow candle-light :
" Six angels for my bed,
Three at foot and three at head,
Beardsley, Strauss, Augustus John,
Bless the bed that I lie on.
Nietzsche, Maeterlinck, Matisse,
Fold my sleep in holy peace."
The vices to which she inclined
Were peccadilloes of the mind.
Her sisters were much less refined,
And often when they sallied out,
With knife and pistol, kriss and knout,
And other weapons of the sort
Adapted to bucolic sport
And rural raptures in the dark,
They took occasion to remark :
" Why, wot the 'ell's the — use
O' 'Edda, she ain't got no juice,

She'll gas and jabber till all's blue,
She'll talk but she will never do.
Upon my oath, it is fair sickenin'."

And so at last they gave her strychnine,
A thing efficient though not gory.
And Hedda drops from out the story.

Four daughters, seven sons were left,
But still the widow felt bereft,
She was distressed at Hedda's loss,
And found it hard to bear her cross.
She tried to find a salve for it
By studying in Holy Writ.
She read the exciting episode
Of how good Moses made a road
Across the rubicundish ocean,
But could not stifle her emotion.
She read of Jews and Jebusites,
And Hittites and Amalekites,
And Joash, Job and Jeroboam,

And Rachel, Ruth and Rehoboam,
And Moloch, Moab and Megiddo,
But still no respite had the widow.
Nothing could charm her grief away,
It grew more bitter every day.
Often she'd sit when evening fell,
And moan : " Ah, Lawkamussy, well,
'Edda was better than the rest,
My 'Edda allus was the best.
Many's the time she's washed the crocks,
And scrubbed the floors and darned the
socks.
When all them selfish gals an' blokes
Was out, the selfish things they are,
A-murderin' and a-rapin' folks,
'Edda would stay 'ome with 'er ma.
Yes, 'Edda was a lovely chile,
I do remember 'er sweet smile,
'Er little 'ands wot lammed and lugged me,
An' scratched an' tore an' pinched an'
tugged me.

I mind me 'ow so long ago,
I set 'er little cheeks aglow,
When I 'ad bin to Ledbury fair
An' bought a ribbon for 'er 'air,
A ribbon for 'er pretty 'ead ;
But now my little 'Edda's dead !
Now while spring pulses through the blood
And jonquils carpet every wood,
And God's small fowls sing in the dawn,
I wish to Gawd I'd naver bin born ! ”

And so at last the widow thought
Things were not going as they ought.
She'd never grumbled in the past :
She'd let them all do things at which
Most parents would have stood aghast—
She'd seen it all without a twitch.
Indeed, religiously she'd tried
To share the joy and fun they'd had ;
But really, this sororicide
Was coming it a bit too bad.

She made her mind up : " It's high time
They stopped their silly vice and crime ! "

She mustered the domestic throng
And gave it to them hot and strong.
" Look here," she said, " this — flux
'Ad best come to a — crux !
I long regarded as diversions
Your profligacies and perversions;
I helped you while you swam in sin,
And backed you up through thick and
thin;
But now you've gone a step too far;
I mean to show you I'm your ma.
Yes, it's you I'm talkin' to, Kate and
John :
You'll have to stop these goings-on.
Murders must stop from this day on ! "

Sons and daughters stood amazed,
Bunker'd, flummuxed, moonstruck, dazed,

Grunted with appropriate swear,
" What's come over the old mare? "

" Stop the murders, stop the drink,
Stop the lechery? I don't fink! "

" If she's had enough of sin,
I guess we'd better do 'er in! "

Thus said Henry, savagely
Whetting his knife upon his knee.

" No," said James, " go easy, brother;
After all, she is our mother.

Just you wait for 'arf a mo'—
Give me 'arf a mo' to show
'Er the thing in a new light,
And mother'll come round all right! "

Love is and was our king and lord,
The tongue is mightier than the sword,
Words may shine at break of day
Like a palace of Cathay,
Words may shine when evening falls
Like the sign of three brass balls.

All the crowd cried, " Righto, Jim !
Jim's a plucked 'un, 'ark to 'im ! "
Chewing half-a-pound of twist,
Smiting the table with his fist,
Jim went on : " Just 'ark to me,
Mother, jest you 'ark to me,"
(He spat with vigour on his hands)
" This is 'ow the matter stands.

" I'll agree we've done enough
Stabbin's, drunks and such-like stuff,
We, unlike our fellow-men,
Have fractured the commandments ten
With others of our own invention
That the scripture doesn't mention.
We have done to heart's content.

And speaking for myself, I've had
Quite enough of being bad;
And to cut the matter short,

Should find uprightness quite good sport.
But, mother, mother, strike me blind,
This must aye be borne in mind,
Mother, mother, strike me rotten,
This must never be forgotten,
We must not think of self alone.
If no one's interests but our own
Were here involved we'd all turn pi,
And put our past transgressions by.
We'd gladly cease our evil-doings,
Promiscuous assaults and wooings,
And end the too-familiar scenes
Which you indignantly have eyed;
Only, alas, our hands are tied,
Another factor intervenes.
For there's a poet up in London
Who, if we stop, will be quite undone,
We do evil for his good,
He inks his paper with our blood;
Every crime that we commit
He makes a poem out of it,

And were we so unkind's to stop, he
Would famish for congenial copy.
My life begins to give my guts hell,
But there's the matter in a nutshell."

" Ay, ay," said Dick, in accents cold,
" Brother Jim the truth has told."
" Ay, ay," the girls said, " do not doubt it,
That's the truth, that's all about it."
" Well," said the mother, " I am human,
Though only a poor widow woman.
Jim's remarks have cleared my sight,
I understand your motives quite,
And when you shed pore 'Edda's blood
Your purpose was distinctly good.
I still must make it understood
I do not like your goings-on,
Espeshly yours, Bill, Sam and John.
But contraventions of the laws
Committed in such worthy cause,
Habits, however atavistic

Prompted by feelings altruistic,
I can't view with disapprobation
Entirely without qualification.

Thought of your evil deeds must pain me,
Thought of your motives must restrain me,
I'm proud to find such virtue in you,
As far as I'm concerned, continue.”²

IMAGINARY REVIEWS

I

“Prolegomena for a System of Intuitive Reasoning.” By F. W. Wiertz. Translated from the third German edition by Julia Elson. (The Channer-Webb Co., New York.)

IT speaks ill for the enterprise of our publishing firms that it should have been left to an American firm to bring out the first English translation of Friedrich Wiertz's *magnum opus*. It was as long ago as 1894 that the late David Andrews—a man who, owing possibly to his lack of an academic connection, never won the philosophic reputation that was his due—first drew the attention of English students to Wiertz by his excellent rendering of the “Torso of Apollo.” Since then the remainder of Wiertz's *Æsthetic* has also been translated, although remarkably badly. But the theory of æsthetics was to him little more

than a side show. He threw great light on some most obscure problems. Unlike many philosophers who have written on the subject, he had some appreciation of beauty; and there are passages in the "Torso" which, from the general reader's point of view, are as amusing, as well-written and at least as sane as the best critical and polemic passages of Nietzsche in his anti-Wagner period. Nevertheless, Wiertz himself attached small importance to these works, and his chief interest lay elsewhere. He believed, and he believed rightly, that there was more permanent value in the "Prolegomena" than in all his other writings put together; and it seems preposterous that we should have had to wait until he has been in the grave ten years before getting an English version of a book which will continue to mould European thought when most of his con-

temporaries are forgotten. It is characteristic of this country. Wiertz is ignored and they bombard us with Eucken.

The first sentence of the book is an earnest of what follows. "When doctors disagree," says Wiertz, "honest men come by their own"; combining two proverbs which exist both in German and in English. There follows a rapid but most brilliant sketch of the history of philosophy from Heraclitus and Pythagoras to Höffding, Herbert Spencer and T. H. Green, in whom he seems to have taken a special delight. Briefly analysing their systems, or the systems that have been foisted on them by their followers, he shows that almost all of them have been subject to primary delusions that have vitiated the whole of their work. They have made assumptions that they have comfortably stowed out of sight when they

thought the reader was not looking. They have 'drugged themselves into a belief in the all-potency of logic and of analysis. They have been mastered by their own metaphors. They have allowed themselves to think that what cannot be solved in any other way can be solved by a manipulation of words. They have "built long thin ladders into the air, some with many rungs, but all no more capable of containing, or, rather, of comprehending, the universe than my hair is of comprehending the atmosphere." With delightful wit he demolishes "the ancient, modern, and mediæval scholastic philosophies." He quotes Rubinoff: "The philosophers of all sects have spent three thousand years burying the fair form of Truth under a mass of verbal sewage." This unsavoury accumulation Wiertz, with a grace that leads one to suspect him of non-Teuton

blood, shovels aside with great sweeps of the pen and drops on the benighted heads of its original depositors.

“ Down with Words,” “ Down with Philosophers,” “ Down with Systems ”; these are three of his next chapter headings. The uninitiated might well wonder why he proceeded to imitate those whom he denounced. The reader has taken respectfully his descriptions of his predecessors: Plato, “ a bad artist with a depraved taste for social reform ”; Hegel, “ a windbag who was born burst ”; Schopenhauer, “ a dyspeptic mushroom on half-pay ”; Spinoza, “ a wandering Jew ”; Kant, “ a corpulent cypher ”; Zeno, “ a lamppost without a lamp ”; Fichte, “ the echo of a bad smell ”; Aristotle, “ an industrious publisher’s hack,” and so on. What had he to do with words and systems? How did he hope to escape the

lot of all the others who have attempted to "draw maps of the dark side of the moon"? It is bare justice to him to say that he realised the inconsistency; it is also bare justice to add that he never constructed a system, though he had the temerity to provide materials for a system that a more foolish successor might construct. But, still he did not confine himself to destructive criticism, to negation. He was not a philosopher of the study. He had had a training in positive science, and for some time he even took part in the politics of Saxony, his state. Never losing sight of his limitations, he achieved by experiment and speculation results which, whatever their relation to the Eternal Sphinx, may be of the greatest practical value.

It is impossible here to detail the way in which Wiertz arrived at his method, or the

manner in which he, with unexampled lucidity, defended its use. Roughly speaking, his process was this: "What," he asked, "is the usual concept of a concept?" After examining and rejecting a number of illustrations for it he chose that of the unfolding mirror that is being continually breathed upon. By induction he concluded that if the breath could be removed the mirror would become clearer. Both experience and common-sense (which, though he could not defend it, he deemed important) tell us that the operation of stopping the breath cannot be performed by a phenomenal agency. We have to look, then (and even Hegel could not have rejected this conclusion), for a non-phenomenal, or, rather, a super-phenomenal agency. But this super-phenomenal agency can only be grasped by super-phenomenal means; and here Wiertz's

years in the laboratories came to his rescue. He had noticed, when weighing sections of an amoeba, that the weight of the sections was always less than that of the whole, and that the discrepancy varied with the temperature, being greatest when the temperature was high and least when it was low. For this Residuum, to which he chose to give the name Supraliminal Intuition, he discovered the formula : $\cos 65 \log 2 = 23 \sin 45 \times \sqrt{2^{15}}$. On this formula which can convey but little to anyone who is not a mathematician, he built, by a long and careful process of argument, his theory or, rather, his working hypothesis of the Intuitive Reason. It is this process that fills the greater part of the *Prolegomena*. To the average reader these chapters must of necessity be difficult and rather dull. But it is well worth while making the effort to master them in view of the bearing that

they have on the concluding chapter, the chapter that is being made the basis of a whole political theory in Germany and Italy and that some of the French Syndicalists have appropriated to their own use.

The Wiertzians have gone to the most extreme lengths in the affirmations they have made with the Prolegomena as justification. When one says this one does not imply that they advocate or assert much that is shocking to bourgeois sentiment in the sense that Nietzsche, Stirner, Marinetti and Tolstoi are shocking. Where they run to excess is in the meticulousness with which they apply the Wiertzian instrument. Hirsch-Menkendorff, the latest of them, gravely informs the world not merely that women's suffrage is bad, that beer is good, that the government should be run by commercial men, that Sabbatarianism and cruelty to animals go hand in hand, but

announces with all the air of a solemn prophet: "God objects to compulsory insurance." Wiertz never went into such detail as this himself. But it may at least be said that there is little that the average middle-class man says or does or thinks that he cannot find defended and justified in his pages. "I am," said he, "the Apotheosis of the Ordinary." It is absurd that he should not have been translated into English before.

Miss Elson's rendering is scholarly and her language clear and idiomatic. But here and there, unfortunately, there are Americanisms that a British audience will scarcely stomach. English people do not allude to a "bunch of philosophers," and for "hand-grip," on page 164, "portmanteau" or "hand-bag" might have been substituted.

II

“The Collected Poetical Works of William Scotton.” Edited with notes by Bernard L. Easterbrook. (2s. 6d. net.)

THOSE who know their Boswell intimately may remember a certain conversation which the biographer chronicles under date of 15th November 1774. It runs as follows:—

“ I dined with him at General Williamson’s, where were also Mr Langton, Mr Beauclerk, Dr James of St Albans, and a gentleman from Bristol whose name I do not now recollect. Poetry being mentioned, the Bristol gentleman praised with much warmth the poetical compositions of Mr Scotton, more especially the ‘Country Wooing,’ which had then lately appeared.

Johnson: 'No, sir; Scotton is well enough for a man of no learning. It is true that he is well acquainted with the forms of trees, brooks, clouds and other natural objects, but that does not make him a poet. Scotton writes of Nature as an intelligent cow might write of her, presuming the cow to have some suitable contrivance for transcribing her cogitations. In Parnassus he shall be our horned poet, our *poeta cornutus*.' Boswell: 'But, sir, Mr Edwards hath a very great opinion of Scotton.' Johnson: 'Mr Edwards, sir, is a doltish fellow; and you, sir, are another.' "

Scotton at this time was enjoying a brief fame. We find favourable references to him in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and Horace Walpole speaks of him in such a way as to give the impression that, for a while at all events, every person who

desired a reputation for taste affected to praise the poet. But his little "boom" was soon over, like those of Dyer, Boyce and Blacklock, and since Boswell's day he has fallen into an abyss of oblivion far more complete than that which shrouds those writers. From 1779, when the third edition of his poems appeared, he has never been reprinted until the present day. And it may be said that just as his early repute was adventitious, so his later neglect has been undeserved.

Scotton, like Clare and Bloomfield, came of rural labouring stock. He was one of a family of nine, children of Thomas Scotton, who worked under a farmer at Leiston, Suffolk, a tenant of Sir William Bolton. At an early age he learnt to read and write, and before he was fifteen he composed verses and was shown as a prodigy at the houses of the neighbouring

gentry. The Duchess of Devonshire, seeing his juvenile work, sent him to have his education completed under a clergyman at Wimbledon, who seems to have taught him nothing. At nineteen he came to town with a small allowance from her Grace. After his two volumes of poems, both of which were published before he was twenty-eight, he wrote nothing of any merit. Society lost its interest in him; his allowance stopped with the death of his patron; he lingered in Fleet Street for a few years as a bookseller's hack, and at thirty-seven he died. So completely had he dropped out of sight that, were it not for an entry in the register of St Mary Axe which has been disinterred by the energy of the present editor, we should not know the date or place of his death.

His poems consist of the "Country Wooing," which is in blank verse, a long

poem in rhymed couplets entitled “Doris and Philemon,” and about fifty lyrics, mostly quite short. Nobody could deny, and Mr Easterbrook makes no attempt to deny, that a great deal of this is very commonplace. Scotton, like Burns, had a native style and a cultivated style. Most of his time he was attempting to write like the other poets of his day, and a great deal of his work is little more than an accumulation of artificial sentiments, dead epithets and deader metaphors. The following, from “Doris and Philemon,” is a characteristic passage :—

Now the declining fulgent orb of day
Tinged all the landskip with his latest ray ;
Philemon came to seek the blooming fair,
Rending with gloomy moans the conscious air.
“ Doris,” he cried, “ my Doris I would find—
Doris, my Doris, beauteous and kind,
Doris the queen of all our rural train,
Doris a nymph admir’d by ev’ry swain.”

No pleasing answer pierc'd his list'ning ear ;
In vain his eyelids shed each sparkling tear ;
No virgin accents came, no step of love
Trod the soft verdure of the silent grove,
No lovely face to beam upon his heart,
To calm his breast and ease his painful smart.
With tortured breath for Phœbus' aid he wails,
Shrieks to the trees and murmurs to the gales :
" Me wretched ; bring me Doris or I die."
But only scornful Echo made reply.

This, it must be admitted, is feeble and derivative. Stuff undistinguishable from it, no more flat and dull and no more hackneyed in expression, was written by scores of men of Scotton's day, now deservedly forgotten. The whole of this long pastoral is in this vein, and a good many of the lyrics are as bad. Some, again, whilst neatly and tunefully put together, are vitiated by this commonplaceness and conventionality that the Suffolk youth found it so hard to resist and that swamped his own genuine freshness and personality.

There are dozens of verses in the fashion of these addressed “To Miss L. F. on the Occasion of her Departure for the Continent” :—

Wherefore, Lucinda, dost aspire
To leave thy native plain,
Forsaking thine adoring quire
To brave the raging main?

Are domiciliar dells so dark,
So dull our English vales,
That thou must trust thy slender bark
To inauspicious gales?

If thou wouldst fain console the Muse,
In explanation speak!
See now the tender blush suffuse
Lucinda’s lovely cheek;

A pitying word vouchsafes the fair :
“ I seek a foreign plain
That I with more delight may share
My native meads again.”

If all Scotton’s work were like this it would not be worth reprinting. But in some of it, and especially in the “Country

Wooing," about which Dr Johnson was so contemptuous, another note is struck. This country boy really, when free from contemporary literary influences, wrote about Nature as one who can look at her with his own eyes and who was moved by her in a manner familiar to but few verse writers of that artificial and urban age. It is a remarkable thing that when his thought is at its best and his feeling most direct his language becomes least stilted and dated. Here and there he reaches a freshness of vision and a moving simplicity of speech that give him a claim to be considered with Cowper and Collins amongst the forerunners of the renascence which came with Wordsworth, Coleridge and Blake. His blank verse in places has a vigour and tone and freedom of movement almost unknown to an age when that species of verse usually moved on feet of lead and was employed

mainly for didactic and expository purposes. Here is a passage to the point. It is from the "Country Wooing." If any influence is perceptible it is that of Milton:—

So lay the youth with Mary in his arms,
Pale with excess of bliss. But when the maid
Perforce must leave to seek her mother's cot
He climb the higher slopes of Haldon Hill
And looked against the sunset. Low and red,
Calmly suspended 'bove the horizon's rim,
Burned the great globe, and far and far away
The meadows coruscated with his light.
There sat the boy an hour, his thoughtful chin
Supported by his hand, and over all
The universe his eager thought took flight.
He saw lone vessels straining on far seas,
Spread continents of dusky peoples, woods
Where lurked vast she-lions with stealthy eyes,
And icy deserts round about the Pole.
He flung the earth behind his voyaging feet,
And flew amid the stars beyond the moon,
Across the threshold of the Milky Way
And on into the darkness of the void
Impenetrable. So an hour he journeyed.

Then, with a sudden start, regained the world,
And, weary-eyed, stared over sunless fields
And shades that hastened over Haldon Hill.

It were superfluous to point out that there are defects in this. There is not much continuity; the thing is rather a hotch-potch; nevertheless, a native strength and a certain intensity of imagination are observable that are lacking in the works of many better-known eighteenth-century writers. Here is another extract a page or two farther on:—

'Twas night. High in the heavens rode the moon,
With her great shining host of starry guards.
Pale lay the fields i' th' light, so that they seemed
Almost celestial to Richard's eyes.
There where the river wandered stole he down
And heard the owlet screaming to her mate
And the bat twittering. Anon some downy moth
Would flutter like a phantom 'gainst his face,
Anon he'd hear as by a hedge he passed
Some good old hermit of a horse that fed
With loud bite in his dark and tranquil field.

Here again, though some might detect in one place a reminiscence of the Countess of Winchilsea, there is something which, although rather shapeless, is far more exhilarating than the endless verses the century produced concerning Diana regent of the skies shedding lucent affluence on nocturnal prospects. And Scotton produces similar pleasant effect in some of his shorter poems. Here is a stanza from "The Swallow" :—

Birds, trees and flow'rs they bring to me,
A boon as precious as 'tis free,
That cities cannot give.
O glossy breast and rapid wing,
If thou shouldst e'er forsake the spring
I should not wish to live.

And here is one from "My Father's Cot" :—

I left thee with a courage high,
The gleam of boyhood in my eye,
And undefilèd soul.
And now what have I? Shreds of art,
A craven spirit and a heart
That never will be whole.

There is sincerity in those lines, and there is tragedy.

Mr Easterbrook has done his work excellently. In his introduction and notes he gives us what scanty material he has been able to collect concerning Scotton's life. He has not overburdened the book with superfluous comment, but what critical remarks he does make are admirably to the point. He has done a great service to letters, and is fully justified in his assertion that "In the future no anthology of eighteenth-century verse will be complete without some extracts from Scotton and no history of English poetry adequate without some reference to him."

III

“The Recovery of the Picturesque.” By Professor William Pigott-Jones. (Chadwick & Hopkins. 10s. 6d. net.)

It looks as though the propaganda of William Morris were beginning to have some genuine practical effect. One cannot class as such the so-called “revolution” in designs for stuffs and furniture that has been witnessed during the last generation. In the first place these changes in design have had a bearing only upon the lives of the prosperous minority, and none whatever upon those of the masses or the general social life of the nation; and, in the second place, change in this respect has not generally meant improvement. Morris’s ideas—as commonly happens—have been degraded in adaptation and, save in regard

to a very narrow sphere, we have merely seen a change from one kind of bad and stupid design to another. But Morris's artistic gospel had a far wider scope than mere suggestions for improving the appearance of our domestic conveniences. If he revived tapestry weaving, he also wrote "News from Nowhere." Over and above everything else he stands for the transformation and development of our public amenities. Here, in fact, we have the key to his Mediævalism. It was not so much the handicraft of the Middle Ages or their Chivalry or their Faith that attracted him, as the variety, colour and energy of their social life. His objection to modern conditions took its rise not so much from ethical or economic theory (though with these he was incidentally concerned), as from his objection to ugliness, gloom and uniformity. "Merry England" to him

was more than a Christmas-card phrase; the words embodied a contrast and a protest. He detested "six counties overhung by smoke," and the appalling sameness of modern dress, the absence of green from our cities, of colour from our streets, and of sports from our countryside. He dreamed of an England pastoral and agricultural, sprinkled with small towns where the traveller could find things curious and beautiful and new, instead of things noisily monotonous and aggressively tedious. Others, of course, have shared his views on the matter, but no one has voiced them so eloquently as he. And, thanks chiefly to him, the Revolt against Uniformity has begun.

We have never entirely succumbed to it. We have never quite let *Merrie England* go out of mind. She has been kept, as it were, like a beautiful lady in the cupboard

whilst all the skeletons are at the feast. Occasionally when we have felt it our solemn duty to be festive we have shown that we still have a half-idea of what we really ought to do. I do not suggest that we ever entertain the idea of pulling down London, of seriously modifying the big results of *laissez-faire* politics; and Professor Pigott-Jones believes that we have most to gain just now by keeping off the largest problems. But whenever we have a ceremonial holiday, we furtively draw out some of the symbols of an earlier and better civilisation. For example, during the recent Coronation festivities, the occupants of offices in Lombard Street revived the ancient sign-boards. Bankers and wholesale merchants disported themselves with brand-new and cheerfully coloured Eagles and Leopards and Three Old Cocks, and so forth. But as though

ashamed of our temporary lapse into sense we remove these delightful ornaments directly the immediate cause of their fabrication has been removed. Coronation over, Lombard Street became its old and dull self again.

It is with apparently small matters like this of the sign-boards that Professor Pigott-Jones busies himself. He believes that here and now he can do most good—whilst never losing sight of his ultimate Utopianism—by studying how in small ways we can improve things as they are. “Granted,” he says, “that London, as we know it, must in its essentials remain; granted that commercialism continues, and that the arrangement and design of houses and streets remains what it is. How, whilst ignoring fundamentals, can we touch up, or, as it were, trim the superficies of our modern bustling city life in such a way as

to invest it with some of those qualities, the absence of which was so rightly and justly deplored by the great poet-craftsman who was so recently in our midst? " He proceeds in a most fascinating book of five hundred pages to outline his own suggestions for amelioration.

Now, it must be frankly admitted that some of his suggestions are quite unlikely to be adopted; some, in fact, might, by a cold-blooded person, be called fantastical and fanatical. Occasionally his exuberance and enthusiasm run away with him and he advocates things that could no more be grafted on our present-day civilisation than an elephant's tusks could be grafted on a mollusc of the slime. But, generally speaking, he is as practical as he is inspiring. He urges changes in small detail so numerous and excellent in their cumulative effect that, were they all achieved, they

would certainly do a great deal to render modern London tolerable to a sane human being.

The signs above referred to are one of the ancient novelties he would reintroduce. Englishmen never, to 'do them justice, abandoned these things voluntarily, or because they had ceased to appreciate them. The reason why they disappeared is that one day a certain too venerable and decrepit sign fell upon the head of a passer-by and killed him. The small clique of busybodies who at that time ruled England forthwith introduced an Act making projecting street signs illegal. Even to-day there are rigid restrictions as to the size, height and construction of such sign-boards. Whether on the whole it is not advantageous to retain such excellent things, even though they may be a little 'dangerous, does not seem to occur to any

of our rulers. Lives, they think, may be wasted in the making of wealth but not in the making of beauty. It is right and proper that coal-mining and the running of railways should go on, even though thousands of men should each year lose their lives in those occupations. But not one arm or leg should be sacrificed for the sake of what are called "non-economic goods." Should a stray water-wagtail by chance peck a baby's eyes out, they would at once start a campaign for the extirpation of water-wagtails. "Let us," says the Professor, "see every business street in London gay with bright signs which will restore to us in large measure both our colour and our symbolism. Let the Pig and Whistle and the Goat and Compasses be something more than mere names. Let them be a tonic to our adults and an inspiration to our young folk."

Separate chapters are devoted to various special departments, such as Paint, Bunting and Uniforms. Whilst reluctantly admitting that the stage has not been reached at which we can expect the ordinary private citizen to alter his costume, he points out that it would be easy to begin with public servants and other persons upon whom some "regulation" attire is enforced by orders from above. It only needs to get the sympathy of, say, the Postmaster-General or the City Corporation or the Chairman of Directors of some important railway to transform at once the appearance of a large body of men who, speaking visually, may be termed prominent men. He disclaims any idea of going to the Morrisian Extreme of Golden Dust-men. He sees that all that we can hope for just now is the adoption of official costumes which may be more æsthetically pleasing

than those now in vogue and at the same time equally suitable for working purposes. Why, he asks, should postmen, policemen and railway servants wear three of the most hideous forms of costume that ever defaced the form of man? If policemen must have helmets, he inquires, why should they not have gracefully modelled shining helmets of brass or white metal, instead of "melancholy blue tumuli with poker-knobs on the top?" Without, he argues, going to the extreme of equipping postmen with the cap and rod of winged Mercury, cannot we supply them with something which will bring a little brightness and joy into our dingy streets, and which may even counteract the depressing influence of the unpaid tradesmen's bills that they are delivering? As for the railwaymen, he frankly suggests that the men at the different underground stations

should bear on their persons some emblem representing the places to which they are attached. “ I do not go to what would seem the grotesque length of saying that at Blackfriars the ticket-collectors should be garbed with rope, rosary and friar’s gown, or that the men at the Temple should wear the robes of Greek hierophants. But I do say that, whilst retaining the form of garment in general use to-day (I refer to the coat, the waistcoat and the trousers), a great improvement in colour might be wrought and the colours varied for the different stations; and that at each station some little badge or token might be worn which would remind one of its particular associations and greatly relieve the tedium of our journeys.”

It is perhaps in the chapter on nomenclature that Professor Pigott-Jones gets most interesting. He inveighs with earnest

eloquence against the naming of our streets, our churches and our theatres, our modern public-houses and our shops. He points out with great force the viciousness of the custom of calling our public-houses after the streets in which they are situated (as the "Albert"), or by some supposedly patrician name lifted out of a cheap novellette (as the "Beaumont Arms"). "Let the names of our public-houses grow once more," says he, "out of the soil of the human heart." He gives specimens, including the "Man Laden with Mischief," at Madingley, and the "Live and Let Live," which graces the crest of a Somersetshire hill. In olden days, he observes, it was the custom to name streets after some genuine local association. "If a street was small and ran by the Thames, men called it Little Thames Street; if the builder of an alley had his attention at-

tracted by a limping cur, we got a Lame Dog Alley, and the neighbourhood of a vixen could procure for a thoroughfare the name of Scolding Mary Lane. To-day it is nothing but John Street and George Street and Westminster Road and Ladysmith Avenue. The imagination that used to go to the making of local names is no longer present. We have banished the natural man. Fancy, caprice and spontaneity are no more with us; or, if they are with us, we keep them well locked up under our hats." He gets most lyrical when he throws out the quite original suggestion of a plan which might invest even our motor buses with something of romance. The passage is, I think, worth quoting at length :—

" With good will and a few buckets of paint our very motor buses could be turned

to good use. At present I feel an angry aching at the heart whenever I see one. For why? They are all exactly the same! With few exceptions, their colour is red, and the word 'General' is splashed across them in large letters. I walk along the Strand and there they pass in endless, irritating iteration—red General after red General—never a change for the eye, never a variety for the mind. Surely, now that almost the whole of our omnibus traffic has passed into the hands of one great company, the motives (advertisement, distinction from the buses of other companies, etc.) which may have prompted this sameness of name and colour in earlier days are no longer valid. Generally speaking, if we see a bus we know it is a General, and there's an end on't. It would cost the company scarcely any trouble or loss, whilst at the same time adding im-

mensely to the amenities of our streets, were the buses on each route given a distinctive colour and name. We had something of the sort in the old days of the horse buses; I believe that the 'Monster' bus and the 'Favorite' bus are still with us, although I have not had occasion to use them lately. It might, perhaps, be confusing to call each individual omnibus by a special name as we do each ship in the Navy—though that would be a very desirable consummation were it attainable. But there could certainly be no inconvenience in giving one name to all the buses on a particular route. I conceive that such names might be at once picturesque and symbolic; they might be at once classical in their flavour and peculiarly modern in their implications. Why, for instance, should we not have the Vulcan or the Thor running to Hammersmith? I hope I shall

live to see the day when I may go to Battersea by the Xerxes and by the Pandora to Canning Town. What more suitable name than that of the fair metamorphosed Daphne, god-pursued, could be bestowed upon the bus which should take us to Turnham Green? And how intimate might not be the association of goat-foot Pan with Tooting? For the buses on the Ealing rout I choose as by impulse the name of *Æsculapius*; for those which go to Peckham that of Leda, mother of beautiful children. The Styx should run to Mortlake, the Polyphemus to Wapping, the Amazon to Holloway, the Dionysus to Fulham, the Sisyphus to Crouch Hill, the Actæon to Hornsey, the Persephone to Bloomsbury, the Vitellius to Eaton Square, the Cleopatra to Purley, the Cerberus to Barking, the Trojan Horse to Walworth, the Prometheus to Liverpool

Street, the Bucephalus to Hackney, the Rhadamanthus to Chancery Lane, the Crœsus to Westminster, and the Tantalus to Whitechapel? Think of it—a London ablaze with moving symbols and ringing day-long with the names of the gods and heroes of old time!"

It is impossible in the short space at my disposal to do justice to this fascinating and stimulating book. It is a book that may well initiate a great movement that will leave permanent marks upon the face of our country. Once one has taken it up it is exceedingly difficult to lay it down. It cuts through shams and deep into the flesh of humanity. It has the stuff of life in it. And it possesses that rare thing, that elusive quality, charm.

IV

“The Seventeenth Canto of Byron’s Don Juan.”
Now first edited and published by David
M’Kie. (The Scots Reviewers’ Society. Two
guineas net.)

THE discovery last year of a lost canto of Byron’s “Don Juan” is one of the greatest literary “finds” of recent times. In itself, perhaps, the thing is not particularly valuable; far greater treasures lie beneath the lava of Herculaneum and the sand of Aphroditopolis. The new canto is in style and content rather inferior to the sixteen old ones; and the poem in its old state was quite long enough for most people. But the excitement of a discovery like this depends not so much upon the quality of the new matter as upon the greatness of the author; were a new book of Wordsworth’s “Excursion” found—even were it as dull

as it could be—all literary England (which never looks into “The Excursion”) would read it and talk about it.

It has always been suspected that this canto might turn up. There are letters from Byron extant written to Moore and to John Murray in which he mentions the seventeenth canto as having been completed and sent to one or two of his friends to look at. Why he did not publish it is uncertain, but it may be presumed that he meant to write a further continuation and to publish several cantos at once. And a complete mystery overhangs its progress to the library in which it was found—that of Mr Ellis of Newton Grange. Byron had the manuscript by him just before his last journey to Greece; we know that from a flippant letter to the Countess Guiccioli which appears in Mr Harker’s collection. Mr Ellis, as it happens, is a great-nephew

of Mrs Chaworth-Musters, the poet's first love. Conceivably this may give a clue. "Might not," says Mr M'Kie, "Byron have had this canto with him at Missolonghi and might he not have sent it home by his servant, Fletcher? It is well known that he entrusted Fletcher with messages to the wife and daughter from whom he had so long been parted. Is it not conceivable that the same faithful attendant may have been told to deliver this manuscript as a parting gift to the lady who had been Byron's first love, and whose image he had cherished unsullied through all those stormy years. And might it not, either through accident, or as a consequence of some testamentary disposition which may yet be traced, have passed into the Ellis branch of the lady's family?" Failing any better hypothesis, this one is sufficiently tenable, though one may be permitted to

observe that this canto was a curious memento to bestow in such a quarter. The main thing is that the canto has been recovered.

The sixteenth canto ends with Juan's discovery of the Duchess of Fitzfulke masquerading at night in the corridor as the Friar's Ghost. The new canto takes up the story at that point.

As Shakespeare states, we frequently discover
A goodly apple rotten at the core,
Maidens ere now have entertained as lover
A vampire with a *goût* for virgin gore,
And, sailors know, a welcome light may hover
Above a treacherous and greedy shore,
And if you touch a duchess you may prod a sty—
But I was always noted for my modesty.

The lady, judging by her laughing eyes,
Thought lightly of this midnight misdemeanour,
The youth had penetrated her disguise,
But he of course would never say he'd seen her.
But being (as you know) averse from lies,
Our hero felt extremely loath to screen her.
Juan, in fact, was most extremely shocked :
" Friar," he said, " you ought to be unfrocked ! "

Juan, with his familiar softness of heart, forgives her Grace for her deceitfulness and the fright she had given him, and the episode ends in the customary manner of the poem. This takes us up to the fifteenth stanza. The sixteenth sees Juan one of a house-party in Lincolnshire, where he retails his adventures and is lionised in consequence. He is, for the time, free from amorous entanglements, but very nearly ruins himself by shooting a fox. The coolness bred by this exploit leads to his migration to London, where he stays at his country's Embassy and in due course goes to Court. George III.'s son is here treated as badly as was George III in the "Vision of Judgment." Juan, young prude, reflects gravely on the royal morals and facetiously on the royal appearance, comparing him to all the other bloated persons and bulging things that he had

seen in his life : balloons, hogs, the Rock of Gibraltar and the poetical works of Robert Southey. He goes to Parliament in the fifty-fifth stanza, and goes to sleep in the fifty-sixth, the sonority of his snores interrupting a speech by the Duke of Wellington. The Duke, however, restrains officious persons who would have the distinguished visitor removed :

The noble warrior
Having a fellow-feeling for a nose
Refrained from interrupting his repose.

He mingles in literary society, which he finds composed of pretentious strutters who feed on garbage from the gutters and spend their time looking for a genuine poet in order that they may stone him. In the eightieth stanza he goes to Coleridge's after dinner. Coleridge talks for thirty stanzas :

Juan could not determine
Why in a land so rich in mental ordure
Supplies should be imported from the German

Again he goes to sleep; to wake up in the morning with the sun shining and his oblivious host still talking. Juan has taken in nothing of it; he “departed thus, his mind *in puris naturalibus*.” But he has had enough of England and, without taking leave of his acquaintance, ships from Wapping to Spain, which by this time will be cool enough to hold him. The hundred and thirtieth stanza is the last.

The new canto is certainly not very interesting either as poetry or as satire. The pinions of Pegasus are flagging. There are none of those fine flights of rhetoric that adorn the earlier cantos; the invective is cheap, and Byron’s scores off his bug-bears are not so terse and pointed as of yore. But such as it is, it is the end of a

great work. The lost toe of the statue has been recovered, and even though it is a dull toe it does fill up a lacuna in the statue. Mr M'Kie's editing leaves little to be desired, but one or two errors have found their way into his usually informative notes. 1832 is not the year of J. W. Croker's death, nor of the death of Wordsworth; whilst it was the Whigs and not the Tories who were primarily responsible for the passage of the Reform Bill of that year. The present reviewer shares Mr M'Kie's curiosity as to what Byron would have thought of that Bill. There can be little doubt that it would not have satisfied him and that Earl Grey and Lord John Russell would have lent themselves (particularly Lord John) to his sarcasm. Take him for all in all we shall not look upon his like again.

“The Poetical Works (in English) of Robert Hoskyns.” Edited with Introduction and Notes by Archibald Thorne. (The Laurel Library. 3s. 6d. net.)

SOME time or other we shall, I suppose, get a respectably complete series of reprints of the Elizabethan poets. The greater of them are accessible in many editions, but many of respectable accomplishment and fame, such as Anthony Munday and Nicholas Breton, have not yet been issued in a cheap, worthy and complete form. With the appearance of the present volume we see justice—or more than justice—done to a metrical luminary decidedly inferior to those mentioned, but nevertheless interesting and well deserving resurrection. Save that Gillespie reprinted some dozen of

Hoskyns' poems in his "Tudor Songs" nothing of Hoskyns' has been published in the last century. Mr Thorne has not merely restored to the reading public much meritorious poetry, but, what is far more important, he has at last given scholars (who have hitherto found the rare copies of Hoskyns difficult of access) an opportunity of estimating accurately Hoskyns' place in the development of English poetry and of placing him in his proper niche in the great Elizabethan hierarchy.

Mr Thorne has performed at least one great service to research. He has added one important fact to our scanty knowledge of the poet. Hitherto we have known the date of his birth (1552), that of his entry at Peterhouse, Cambridge (1567), and that of his death (1591), which latter was ascertained some twenty years ago by Dr Boddington in the course of an ex-

amination of the parish registers of the Isle of Ely. The register at Stationers' Hall also records the date of entry of Hoskyns' one volume, "A Garden of Daintie Delites"—1582. What we have not previously known, and what Mr Thorne has discovered in a stray leaf of the Admittances in the Harleian MS. 2016, is that in 1576 a "Rob. Hoskynes" was admitted to Gray's Inn. Whether or not he was ever called to the bar, and whether or not he practised, we do not yet know, and it is possible that we never shall know; but so genuine is the modern revival of interest in literature, and so widespread the net of research, that it is by no means inconceivable that this information may some time come to light.

Contemporary references to the poet are very few indeed. There are at the utmost three of them; and in none of these cases

is his name actually mentioned. Mr Thorne believes (and adduces good reason for the belief) that it is to Hoskyns that William Webbe refers in that pungent passage of the "Discourse of English Poetry" in which he speaks of "pottical poetical heads" whose "worshipful commencements might, instead of laurel, be gorgeously garnished with fair green barley, in token of their good affection to our English malt. . . . I scorn and spue out the rakehelly rout of our ragged Rhymers (for so themselves use to hunt the Letter) which without learning boast, without judgment jangle, without reason rage and fume, as if some instinct of poetical spirit had newly ravished them, above the meanness of common capacity." There is a similar reference in Clerke's *Polimanteia* (published a year or two after the poet's death) in which dissolute habits are also alluded

to; whilst the third passage (much later in date and much less certain in its allusion) consists of some lines of Drayton's "Of Poets and Poesie," in which occurs the passage :—

. . . He came likewise who did faile
At making, but at duppling of good ale
Accompted was the best.

It is, of course, not quite certain that any of these passages refers to Hoskyns, and we have no other reason for believing that he was a roysterer or an intemperate drinker; but a careful consideration of the internal evidence makes it highly probable that in each case he was the poet alluded to.

Beyond this all is the merest speculation. Mr Thorne considers and rebuts at length Dr Boddington's contention that Hoskyns was an adherent of the older faith, a contention which is apparently based entirely

on the fact that there is record of a person of that name having studied medicine and theology at Douay after Hoskyns' death, a person who may possibly have been a relation of the poet's but whose relationship has not to date been proved. Men of the name, as far as that goes, may be found not merely among the Catholics but among the adherents of the Church of England and even amongst the most fanatical Brownists; and, in the present reviewer's opinion, it is stretching the point rather too far to take one isolated instance of the occurrence of the name and to jump from that to the conclusion that Hoskyns was a Catholic who (as Dr Boddington has half insinuated) was probably involved in one of the many plots against Queen Elizabeth.

There is no documentary evidence of Hoskyns receiving patronage either from the Court or from individual noblemen.

It is possible that in his later years he may have known the young Shakespeare; and in that case he may have shared with him the encouragement and, possibly, the benefactions of the Earl of Southampton. Philip Sidney again (whose brilliant career was, alas, so soon to be untimely cut short on the stricken field of Zutphen) may have sought and valued his acquaintance. There was much in common between the two men: the love of foreign literature, the keen interest in metrical experiment and in the old ballads, the chivalrousness and warm interest in human nature. Surely it is not an excessive indulgence of the fancy if we assume that two men so much alike in character and tastes should have met in the literary coteries of the time, and, that having met, they should have become fast friends? Is it not possible that here at last we have the solution of that old riddle as

to the person alluded to in the “*Apology for Poetry*” :—“ Now doth the peerless Poet perform both. For whatsoever the Philosopher saith should be done, he giveth a perfect picture of it in someone by whom he presupposeth it was done ” ?

Space forbids quotation here from the many delightful songs in the “*Garden of Daintie Delites*.” Some of them, as Mr Thorne says, “ are not unworthy to be mentioned in the same breath as those of Barnabe Barnes, of Whetstone, and Gabriel Harvey.” They have about them that spontaneity and charm that is the peculiar fascination of the Elizabethan lyric at its best. We have to thank Mr Thorne for his labours. Anything more shrewd than some of his emendations has not been witnessed for some time in this particular region of knowledge. The format is good, print, paper and cover

alike tasteful and pleasant. This is just the book (publishers please note for purposes of quotation) for the train, for the bedside, or for a cosy winter evening in front of the fire, when the winds are howling outside and the logs are crackling within. It is years since we have read a book that has given us at once so much instruction and so much entertainment. It is a book to be read and re-read.

THOUGHTS OF A NATIVE OF BECHU-
ANALAND, WITH A TASTE FOR BOTANY,
WHO HAD BEEN TAKEN AT AN EARLY
AGE TO ST KILDA, WHERE HE HAD EVER
SINCE RESIDED WITH A RESPECTABLE
AND KINDLY BUT VERY SEDENTARY
FAMILY OF THAT ISLAND

I AM only a poor negro,
But I *should* like to see a tree grow.

SOME VERSE

I

A DRINKING SONG FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE

COME hither and hear, my worthy fere,

A rede I would you give,

A precious rede withouten peer

To cherish whiles you live;

Let leeches gibber as they will

And prudes wag whiskers o'er us,

The old drinks are the old drinks still

That heroes had before us.

Better men than we, my bucks,

And larger men than we,

And may we sink if we're too proud

To share the nectar of a crowd

Of better men than we.

On Latian Hill would Horace swill
 Beyond the bounds of speech,
And Vergil knew what wine could do
 Beneath the spreading beech;
And Socrates (as Plato shows)
 Having a rock-like head,
When he could not get binged himself
 Would drink the rest to bed.

Better men than we, my cocks,
 Much better men than we,
And it is meet to follow the feet
 Of better men than we.

Great pots did ding and glasses ting
 When Rabelais trod earth,
And under table he would sing
 For all that he was worth;
Even babes, he swore, should shy at milk
 For wine their proper tipple,
And lustily tug the flagon's teat
 And nip the bottle's nipple.

A better man than we, my birds,
A better man than we,
And should we shrink from the good
drink
Of better men than we?

Time was when Shakespeare tossed the
tankard,
And Jonson bussed the bowl,
Time was—time was when Marlowe drank
hard
When he was up the pole;
And Nash and Greene and Peele would
sit
In sundry cosy taverns,
Cursing that Thames did not run sack
And bellies were not caverns.
The water-bibbers blame them for't,
But they are mokes, pardie,
We will not shun what has been done
By better men than we.

EPILOGUE

Time was when Horace had the headache
And sang lugubrious hymns,
Time was when Shakespeare felt the bed
ache
Beneath his lumbering limbs;
And Rabelais, as limp he lay,
All white about the gills,
Has often wished he'd stuck to (say)
Cod-liver oil or squills.
Better men than we, young friends,
Have wished they'd stuck to tea,
'Tis easier to recover from it,
No strength's required to overcome it;
O no, it is not nice to vomit,
However great we be!

II

A MORAL FABLE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

As a music-hall artist,
Quite one of the smartest
Was Pewter-Pot Peter
The Exhibiting Eater.
This man would engage
To eat things on the stage,
And amassed a large fortune
(Quite out of proportion)
By affording reception
(Without any deception)
To stones, nails and sticks,
And pieces of bricks,
And other small articles
Even worse, such as particles
Of window or bottle;
Which, unlike other folks
In our British community,

He could pass down his throttle
With such total impunity
That he often would joke
With some of the Nuts
Re the strength of his guts;
Contending with vim,
More bombastic than quiet,
That no sort of diet
Could incommode *him*.

But alas for his vaunting,
His swanking and flaunting !
As is always the case
They preceded a tumble,
And the strong was made base,
And the haughty made humble.
And I'm sorry to say
He at last fell a prey
To this terrible failing
Of immoderate boasting.
For one day he was toasting

(Merely to show
How far he could go)
A friend newly-married
In a mile of park railing,
When the victuals miscarried
So that some of the bent rails
Penetrated his entrails.

Very soon in his stomach
He detected a rum ache.
He stood anxiously mute
Whilst it grew more acute,
But in less than a minute
When he tried to stoop,
The spasms it gave him
Made it clear he was in it
(I refer to the soup)
And that nothing could save him.

So as he laid him
Down to die,

He observed with a sigh
" If ever a son o' me
Should develop my knack,
Of eccentric gastronomy,
Do, do hold him back,
Oh, please dissuade him ! "
Then he died as a good
Man always should,
Not afflicted with terrors,
But regretting his errors.

So you see, my dear
Mary Jane Guinevere,
As you've often been told
By your loving relations,
You must always keep hold
Of your own limitations.
And I may as well add
(What you doubtless will guess,
It's invariably bad
To go to excess

With unusual cults,
Which too often proceed to
A course which must lead to
Disastrous results !

EPILOGUE

Asks the maiden : " Please
What cults are these ? "
And inquires if I class so
The tribe of Picasso.
All I say to that
Is this : If the hat
Fits they can wear it,
Though (Alas for the Race !)
There are plenty to share it
All over the place.

III

A MODERN BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

It might be thought we'd had of late
A surfeit of biographies
Of Marmaduke Augustus Breeze,
Such as Professor Godwin Lee's
And Henry Pink's and Mrs Smee's.
And certainly a man like I
Must seriously hesitate
Before deciding to essay
A new and lengthy estimate.
But reasons that I think of weight
Have made me lay reluctance by,
Which weighty reasons, if I may,
I will forthwith proceed to try
To briefly and correctly state.

It seems to me that Mrs Smee
And Henry Pink and Godwin Lee,

Though full of sage discrimination
And flashing much illumination,
Have failed to lay a proper stress
On Breeze's second love affair;
To which, I hold, we chiefly owe
The poet's agonised flow,
His triste embarras de richesse.

I shall not here devote attention
To Breeze's metrical technique,
His language I shall barely mention
And scarcely of his " message " speak.
My purpose is, as I have hinted,
To treat in amplitude unstinted
The maid who brought him to his knees,
The lady's face and parentage,
The poet's matrimonial rage,
The episode's effect on Breeze.

We do not know when first they met
But it seems probable to me

That 'twas in 1823,
When Breeze had just left Winchester,
He had his first encounter with her.

That was the year of Waterloo
When Europe rang with sounds of war
And "Boney's" red and baleful star
Was drenched and dimmed at Trafalgar.
And it is scarcely to be thought
That Breeze, an ardent patriot,
Remained oblivious, deaf and blind
To what possessed the public mind.

But that, be matters how they may,
Does not at present much concern us;
Our footpath lies another way,
Remote from that, and we must turn us
To pretty Birchington-on-Sea
In the year 1823.

Of Mary Nolan's early years
In county Galway there appears

But little record, though 'tis said
Her great-great-grandsire was the head
Of an antique distinguished house
Long settled at Kilballybouse.
Suffice it here to indicate
That Mary's father, when a boy,
Departed from the old estate,
Having decided to migrate,
And took the schooner *Pat Molloy*
To Liverpool where to his joy
He found congenial employ
As clerk to a solicitor
On England's hospitable shore.
The lad was bright, his wits were keen.
He climbed the rungs with such success
That by the year 1815
He found himself in a position
To leave off business and retire
With half-a-million pounds or less.
The fruits of legal acquisition,
And set up as a country squire

In Birchington's remote retreat
Far from the hum of mart and street.

At Birchington the poet found him,
And soon began (I grieve to say)
To win his heart—in fact, get round him—
By talking of his acres wide
And the great house his father built,
And never making mention
(As, candidly, he should have done)
That they were mortgaged to the hilt.

The father smiled, the lover sighed
Sweet nothings to his would-be bride,
Having, as you ere now have guessed,
A disposition to invest
In what he thought must surely be
Double gilt-edged security.

Mary just then was twenty-one,
As fair as any 'neath the sun,

Her hair was gold, her colour fresh,
Her figure neatly decorated
With the right modicum of flesh.
Small wonder Breeze was much elated,
With such a charmer in his snare,
His heart was light as light could be,
And there is little doubt that he,
Would, had they giv'n him half a chance,
Have married Mary then and there.

But ah, the blows of Circumstance.
The wedding day was fixed, the cake
Ordered from Buzsards', fairy lights
Ranged o'er the ornamental lake;
And every morning long ere dawn
Carpenters came from far and wide
To build marquees upon the lawn,
Where all the neighbouring rustic wights
Should toast the poet and his bride.
When suddenly one eventide
Up the great avenue did ride

A stranger who went straight inside
Wearing a look preoccupied.

“ Is Mr Breeze here? ” he inquired.
“ Yes, sir. Come in, sir; you look tired.”
He sat him down within the hall,
Whilst high and low the servants all
Searched for the poet, whom they found
In the wine-cellar underground,
Discussing with his kindly host
What wines the yokels liked the most.
“ You’re wanted, sir! ” He drained his
cup;
But when he reached the upper floor
And saw his agent by the door,
The look that faithful servant wore
Told all too plain, no words could more,
That Breeze’s little game was up.

All the mortgages foreclosed,
Heavy overdraft at bank,

Fifty thousand debts outstanding. . . .
The poet was a man of rank;
Never a trace his face disclosed
Of craven fear; his mouth commanding
Remained magnificently set
Before this awful pile of debt.
"Right, Jones, I'll come to town to-
morrow,

And meanwhile, mind you, not a word."
He did not fume, lament or gird,
But turned with swift determination
Resolved to save the situation
(Albeit the course was rather shady)
By bringing pressure on the lady
To do a bolt for Gretna Green
At once, "just for the fun of the thing."

But no, it was too late to bring
That *coup* off; for upon the scene
Appeared the father, who had heard
The message that the agent brought.

He'd eavesdropped, as no father ought,
And, much to our young singer's sorrow,
Without so much as a " perhaps "
Commanded him to " pack his traps."

In vain did Breeze, with mien distraught,
Protest that there was some mistake,
That Jones's message was a " fake,"
That he had made the day before
Twenty-five million pounds or more
In Kaffirs, which, as Nolan knew,
Had had a leap to twenty-two.
The maid appeared, and to his grief
Joined in her father's vile abuse
With language coarse beyond belief,
That English ladies do not use
And which one scarcely can excuse
Even in girls of Irish stock
With the extremest Fenian views.

Marmaduke reeled beneath the shock,

And went away a broken man.
And from that period began
The note of anguish in his verse
Which often at its most intense
Lashes the reader like a curse;
Which moans amid the eloquence
Of that unequalled "Ode to Rome"
And streaks the sad magnificence
Of "Artemis" and "To a Gnome,"
And is, in fact, so passionate
That there is scarce a single sonnet
Penned subsequently to this date
That does not bear its marks upon it.

Of this, I think, there is no doubt.
Breeze's proverbial "lyric cry"
Is traceable, at least in part,
Directly to this tragedy
Which cut the fibres of his heart
And never wore completely out.
And it is not quite clear to me

Why Henry Pink and Mrs Smee
And even Professor Godwin Lee
Have so persistently ignored
An episode that must afford
In whatsoever light 'tis viewed
Much light on Breeze's attitude,
And outline in perspective sure
What has been hitherto obscure.

DAINTY LYRICS FOR THE
NEWSPAPER PRESS

THE PASSERS

DIVINE are they? For very gods they seem,
Lightfoot and swift and radiant and
lavish;

Light from the sun, speed from the
winds they ravish,

Leaving winds still and sun without a
beam.

Seaward in flashing pageantry they stream,
Lightfoot and swift, clad with no earthly
clangour,

Beyond the bounds of mortal tears and
anger,

The children of the country of a dream.

Ah! stay. Ah! stay, or ever ye depart!

Let no voice haste their going, no bell
toll,

Let no rude clamorousness their
silence break.

Be still, my heart; be still, my beating
heart,

This is the very ecstasy of the soul,
And verily she would perish did she
wake.

HENRY DELISLE.

II

THE HOUSE OF DREAMS

I made my dreams a house,
High though distinctly narrow,
Of biscuits for the mouse,
And bread crumbs for the sparrow,
And honey for the bumble-bees
Who murmured through the may,
And pennies for the little boy,
Who kept the folk away.

But scarcely had I entered
The house of my desire,
Than beams of truth concentrated,
Did set it all on fire;
And as I stood a furlong off
And watched my mansion burn,
I said: " This is, of course, a blow,
But all must live and learn ! "

HENRY DELISLE.

III

TO A.

Two dead roses in a book
Where I hardly ever look;
Two red roses all ablow,
Something like a year ago.

Two dead roses, one dead dream.
Then they swayed above a stream,
Now they lie forlorn and shrivelled. . . .
Lord in heaven, how I drivelled !

HENRY DELISLE.

IV

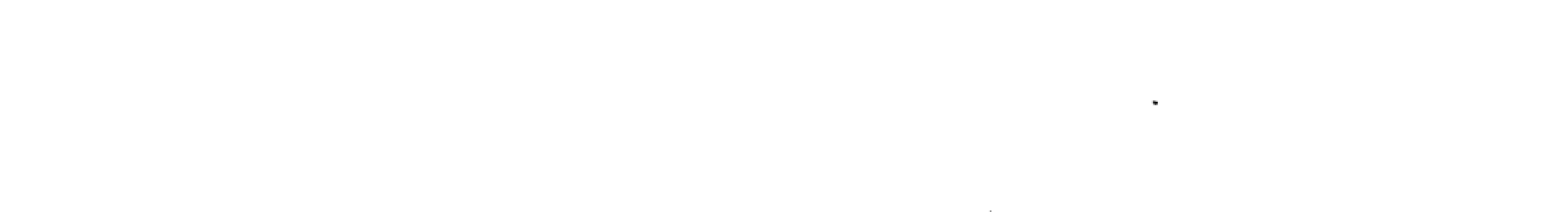
A RESOLUTION

The road is white in sunlight, the sky is
blue above,
A rhyme that can remind one of nothing
else than love,
But as I watch the plovers and scent the
morning wind,
I'm not exactly sorry I've left such things
behind.

For all the fields are singing and all the
fields are sweet,
And all the stones are ringing like silver
to my feet,
And out of sight the lark pours out a
sparkling trill of joy
I never heard with such delight since I was
but a boy.

Though flowers be neglected and birds out
of fashion,
The lark and the dog-rose shall serve my
airy passion,
And here's a roamer's knapsack and here's
a back to bear it,
And if ever I'd a thought of love I here
and now forswear it !

HENRY DELISLE.



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